

The book cover features a highly decorative border in a traditional Islamic manuscript style. The border is composed of repeating floral and geometric motifs in blue, gold, and red, set against a light beige background. The central text area is a solid dark blue rectangle.

**THE
EMPIRES
OF THE
NEAR EAST
AND INDIA**

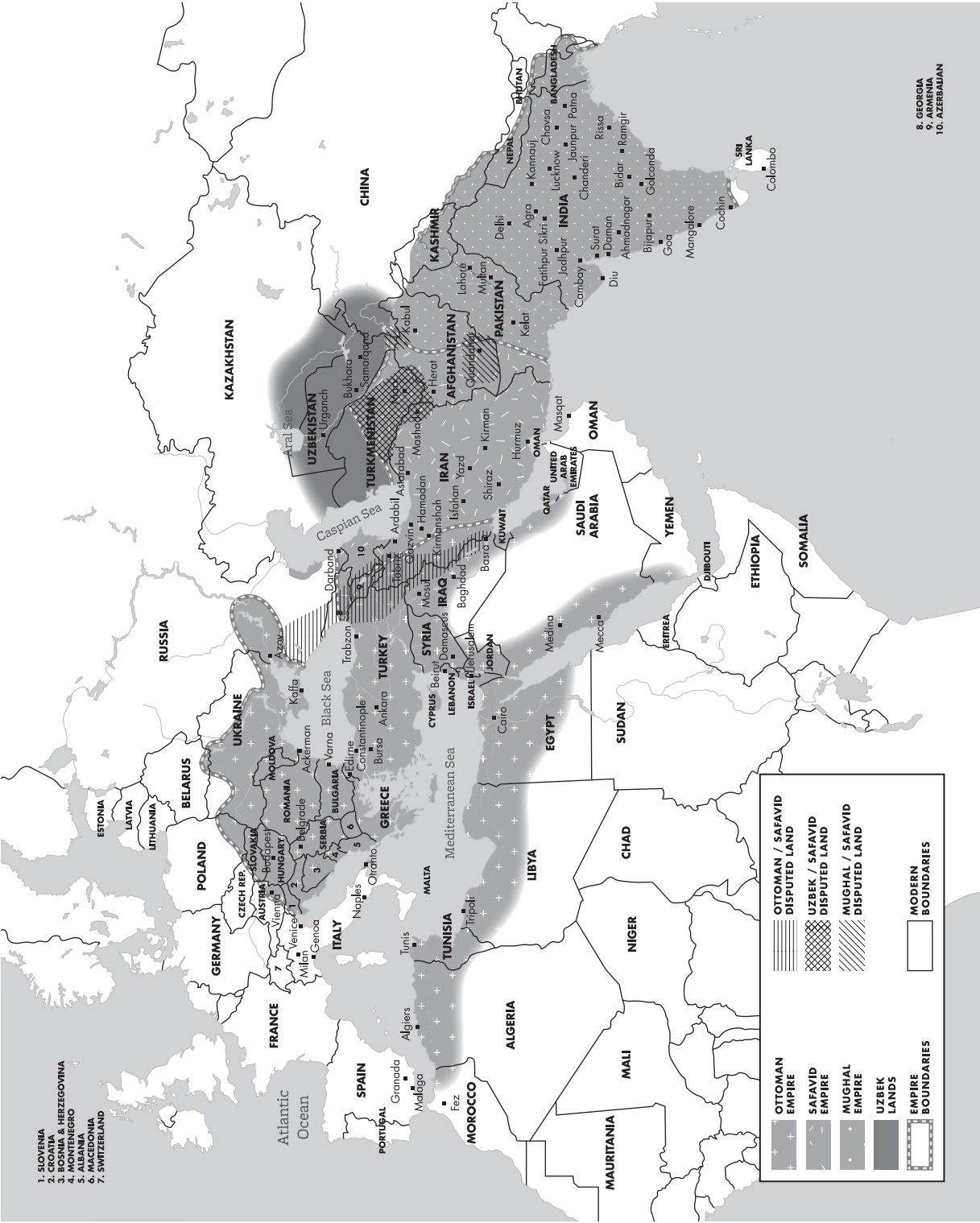
*Source Studies
of the Safavid, Ottoman,
and Mughal
Literate Communities*

EDITED BY
Hani Khafipour

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The Empires of the Near East and India



The Empires of the Near East and India

SOURCE STUDIES OF THE SAFAVID, OTTOMAN,
AND MUGHAL LITERATE COMMUNITIES

Edited by Hani Khafipour



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Cover image: Illuminated frontispiece to Farid al-Din 'Attar's *Mantiq al-tair*
(Conference of the Birds), c. 1600. Courtesy of the
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Dedicated to the silent multitudes in the annals of history, to those who were bereft of their humanity by the folly and greed of empire builders: the slaves, the disabled, farmers, craftsmen, and women whose unrecorded thoughts and action made learning and the production of knowledge possible.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Four languages are represented in this volume: Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The translations are rendered into English using contemporary grammar and syntax. Effort has been made to remain as close as possible to the original language; however, where literal translation would have made the passage incomprehensible, approximation has been adopted.

Finding a single transliteration system for a large project that encompasses four languages and several academic fields proved difficult. The system adopted by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) without macrons and diacritics was embraced for its simplicity and widespread use in various fields of area studies. The borrowed Arabic terms into Persian and Turkish are transliterated based on their common written form in the host languages, thereby retaining the linguistic variations and demonstrating the diversity, as well as the shared textual and oral traditions, of the literate communities. For example, for the Ottoman sources, variations such as the Arabic *madrassa* and the Turkish *medrese*, shaykh al-Islam and şeyhülislam, Muhammad and Mehmet, and so on have been maintained in accordance with IJMES's guideline to "either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography."

Dates are rendered into Gregorian unless shown otherwise in places in which it was vital to retain the Hijri date, such as in image captions, chronograms, seals, and calculations seen in the occult sciences chapters. In such special cases, both dates are provided.

Bibliographic citations are in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*, seventeenth edition. The bibliography includes both the works cited in the essays as well as the translated sources. The books and articles listed in each chapter's "Further Reading" section are omitted from the volume's bibliographies unless the works are also cited in the essay.

IJMES TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM
FOR ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKISH

CONSONANTS

A = Arabic, P = Persian, OT = Ottoman Turkish, MT = Modern Turkish

	A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT
ء	ʾ	ʾ	ʾ	—	ز	z	z	z	z	ك	k	k or g	k or ñ	k or n
ب	b	b	b	b or p	ژ	—	zh	j	j				or y	or y
پ	—	p	p	p	س	s	s	s	s				or ğ	or ğ
ت	t	t	t	t	ش	sh	sh	ş	ş	گ	—	g	g	g
ث	th	s	s	s	ص	ş	ş	ş	s	ل	l	l	l	l
ج	j	j	c	c	ض	ḍ	ẓ	ẓ	z	م	m	m	m	m
چ	—	ch	ç	ç	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	t	ن	n	n	n	n
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	h	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	z	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
خ	kh	kh	h	h	ع	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ	—	و	w	v or u	v	v
د	d	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	g or ğ	g or ğ	ي	y	y	y	y
ذ	dh	z	z	z	ف	f	f	f	f	ة	a ²			
ر	r	r	r	r	ق	q	q	ḳ	k	ال	³			

¹ When h is not final. ² In construct state: at. ³ For the article, al- and -l-.

VOWELS

ARABIC AND PERSIAN				OTTOMAN AND MODERN TURKISH	
Long	ا or آ	ā		ā	{ words of Arabic and Persian origin only
	و	ū		ū	
	ي	ī		ī	
Doubled	ـِيّ	iiy (final form ī)		iy (final form ī)	
	ـُوّ	uww (final form ū)		uvv	
Diphthongs	اَوّ	au or aw		ev	
	اَيّ	ai or ay		ey	
Short	اَ	a		a or e	
	اُ	u		u or ü / o or ö	
	اِ	i		i or i	

For Ottoman Turkish, authors may either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography.

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The Empires of the Near East and India

Introduction

In the middle of the seventeenth century in the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal empires, a series of fundamental religious concerns dominated the spiritual life of various communities. The Mughal emperor Jahangir, for instance, contemplated abrogating the Qur'an, a daring proposal that carried grave political risk. His theologians present at court, unable to immediately provide a satisfactory response, had to reconvene and return the next night to offer the emperor another answer explaining the necessity of all that the holy book contains. Meanwhile, a Jesuit in his court questioned the very prophethood of Muhammad. In the ensuing debate, one of the court theologians assigned to the disputation responded: "Padre! First, tell [us] . . . do you reject the prophethood of Muhammad in particular or prophethood in general?" to which the Jesuit answered, "Why do you ask? What I am saying is that Muhammad is not a prophet. It is your job to prove his prophethood."

In neighboring Safavid Iran, an Armenian Christian by the name of Abkar from Isfahan was tormented by a series of haunting dreams and visions. He recounted one such dream in his autobiography (*The Book of Confessions* discussed in chapter 1), a rare record in which he describes his conversion to Shi'i Islam:

a nebulous shade of light became visible and a bunch of angels holding the edges of the cloud, with one hand the cloud and with one hand a lit candle whose light illuminated the world, and in melodious voice they sang something in the Arabic language that made me dissolve. In the middle of the cloud Lady Mary appeared from head to chest with a crown

made of light on her head. . . . An immense fear engulfed me. I wanted to flee but could not move. . . . I saw how from the midst of that cloud and angels, candle in hand, she came toward me, telling me to take the candle. I was afraid, and told her not to come near. . . . She told me not to be afraid and gave me the candle and I asked her who this light-adorned lady was. She said, “Lady Mary.” She said, “This faith is based on the truth and that you should not be sad.” I then awoke from my sleep. I told my relatives who came to see me about this dream. In response they said that a dream doesn’t mean anything, that it is the work of the devil, and that I shouldn’t give it any credence.

In the expanding Ottoman Empire, meanwhile, a continuous stream of inquiries was presented to religious authorities and judges regarding proper Christian-Muslim relations, especially in the newly conquered territories in Europe, in an attempt to find answers to the everyday politics of lawful coexistence. These concerns resulted in the issuance of a series of Ottoman fatwas (authoritative religious rulings), reflecting the struggle to negotiate an equitable and pious life on the part of the masses while the religious and political authorities promoted the preeminence of Islamic law and Ottoman imperial ideology. One inquiry, for example, asked, “if the *dhimmi* [a protected non-Muslim subject] Zeyd tells several Muslims: ‘Damn you and damn your religion!’ what should be done to Zeyd?” Another question that touched on the daily life of a changing community asked, “If the *dhimmi* Zeyd treats the Muslim Amr with red eggs and pastry on the holiday of the infidels [that is, Easter], and Amr accepts these, is anything to be done to Amr according to the law?”

These instances of interwoven sociopolitical concern affecting multiple religious discourses equaled the political, philosophical, and artistic vitality of the numerous literate communities whose activities are the subjects of the following chapters. The early modern era (roughly 1450s–1750s) in many ways represented the efflorescence of their cultural production, their political and philosophical thought, and their doctrinal sophistication. Although these learned communities lived in demarcated territories carved by the imperial militaries of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal houses, the civilizational legacies they had inherited from their intellectual predecessors of earlier centuries connected them in several overlapping arenas. Examining their connected histories, the factors that marked their divergent paths, and the ways in which they dealt with the cumbersome weight of that tradition is the aim of the authors and their accompanying full-length essays in this book.

No title can capture the intertwined and overlapping nature of the communities discussed in this book, and the existing nomenclatures that aim to offer some kind of unity to the three empires, such as “The Gunpowder Empires,” “Muslim Empires,” or “Early Modern Empires,” all have inherent limitations in their perception of the people that inhabited this vast region and the complexity of their intellectual worlds. I have, therefore, opted for a compromise on the classification, based first on the military-political configuration (that is, all three qualify as

“territorial empires”); second, geographical designation (that is, “the Near East and India,” although I am not fully satisfied with this designation as it is an “eastward” gaze from a Western aperture, whereas “India” remains imprecisely India); and, three, “literate communities,” which makes clear whose histories are examined and whose histories, by necessity, are excluded. To historians’ disappointment, the voices of the historically underrepresented and illiterate strata of society, including peasants and pastoral nomads, women, merchants, and slaves, upon whose toil, blood, and grief the great edifices and cruel glories of these empires were built, are at best indirectly represented here. This limitation may serve as an invitation and encouragement for further research in socioeconomics and cultural histories of the period.

In conceptualizing the scope of this project, I have tried to envision the societies of the three empires not from a conventional notion of “society” or “empire” but from a view that considers these realms as spaces of intersecting networks of communities within the geopolitically distinct yet porous territories that the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal ruling classes viewed as their dominion. The intellectual world examined in this book was shaped by individuals who were members of various literate communities, of poets and painters, scholars and Sufis, bureaucrats and clerics, all with a greater degree of commonality with one another than with their political and military overlords. In analyzing the sociopolitical and religious issues of the era, I have allowed the voices of the members of these communities, as they have come down to us through the textual and pictorial material they left behind, to be the main guide for our exploration. The essays in each chapter, written by specialists from various fields, serve to contextualize those sources and highlight the broader historical issues and scholarly debates.

The study of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal empires as a unit of analysis in particular is a relatively recent occurrence, significantly shaped by the posthumous publication of Marshall G. S. Hodgson’s *Venture of Islam* (1974). The publications of Douglas Streusand’s *Islamic Gunpowder Empires* and Stephen Dale’s *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* in recent years have aided, however indirectly, the efforts to discern structural similarities and variances in their intellectual histories. It is hoped that the existence of multiple points of connection between members of these communities living in each empire unveiled throughout the book will help direct the reader to move beyond examining their perspectives solely through the conventional comparative lens and to engage in studying their “connected histories” and modes of collective action and thought across boundaries.

The shared concerns and differences that these thinkers exhibit in relation to their pursuits are a ready guide for investigating their connected histories as gestalts. Although links are substantial in such fields as philosophy, art, and literature (as in chapters 7, 9, and 11), they become obscure under the burden of an era’s political and religious concerns (for example, in chapters 1, 2, and 3), thus inviting a careful

reading and a world historical context that straddles the lines of “integrative history” and “entangled empires” (close relatives of connected histories) rather than the framework proposed by a “clash of civilizations.”

Attempts at formulating a precise approach to world historical analysis in the West, led by Arnold Toynbee, Fernand Braudel, William McNeill, Marshall Hodgson, and Francis Fukuyama, among others, with a varied degree of engagement with the histories of these three empires, have provided multiple discourses and continue to kindle debate. General “civilizational” studies seek to show patterns and formulate theories, but such accounts invariably rest on the great treasure trove of monographic literature produced by regional specialists and, to a great extent, are shaped by the prevalent views and implicit postulations of that scholarship. Thus we observe that Eurocentrism, orientalism, and nationalist historiographies continue to distort the reception of the region’s early modern past and have an adverse impact on contemporary religio-political discourses. This collection of essays enables readers to critically evaluate the manner in which particular views have shaped historiographical traditions and informed the patterns in scholarship. Furthermore, as a way to help readers abandon shallow categories of disjuncture, a central feature of this volume has been to show the region as multiple overlapping communities whose influences and modes of thought went beyond the imposed political-military borders of their Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal imperial overlords, to reconceive of the roots of the contemporary nation-states of the Near East and India, and to embrace transdisciplinary approaches in the study of the early modern era.

ON HOW THIS BOOK MAY BE OF USE

Conventionally, the history of the three empires has been taught as part of an “Introduction to Islamic Civilization” survey in which roughly fourteen-hundred years is condensed into one or two semesters, with only a few sessions devoted to the era of the empires. Emphasis is generally placed on the early and classical Islamic periods and on the contemporary world. Universities with established Near Eastern and South Asian studies departments, which are able to offer courses on each of the three empires independently, do so as upper division and graduate seminars. Irrespective of the course level and the constraints imposed by semester or quarter academic calendars, the content of this book is meant to facilitate student analysis of historical sources and scholarly debates across the fields of the humanities, including literature, arts, history, religious studies, and political thought.

Teaching a survey of the three empires during the course of one semester to undergraduates who do not possess prior knowledge of the period is compounded by the challenge of how best to guide them to navigate the intellectual pursuits of these communities in their specific as well as world historical

contexts. Moreover, the nature of the sources that they left behind and the relationship of that material to the production of scholarship are difficult topics for class discussion that various essays in the book aim to facilitate. At times the task becomes more daunting given the vastness of a region stretching from the hills of the Himalayas to the shores of the Mediterranean, with a diversity so enormous that it defies traditional categorizations. Although this volume has a limited scope and does little to account for the complexity of regional variations, in a selected way it offers precisely two fundamental pedagogical means to enable student learning: varied historical source material for analysis that may lead to discussions on methodology, and critical scholarly literature to draw forth issues of genre, context, and the resultant construction of perspective. However pedagogical styles differ, source study and its relationship to the production of scholarship remain crucial to academic training, and the structure and content of this book is meant to facilitate this objective.

The book contains eleven chapters, each comprised of three essays, that include a series of translated sources that correspond to the three literate communities. Each source represents a particular voice or experience from within a learned community. For instance, religion is the subject matter of chapter 3, and the opposition to Sufism in Safavid Iran is explored through a debate between Tahir Qummi, an anti-Sufi cleric, and Muhammad Taqi Majlisi, a Sufi sympathizer; whereas the Sufi Hakiki, active in the Ottoman realm, and Ahmad Sirhindi in Mughal India reveal aspects of their experience and practice as Sufis and emissaries of their respective communities. Each of the eleven chapters roughly follows this arrangement. These essays and sources correspond to five overlaying categories of literature, philosophy, religion, politics, and arts.

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction that highlights some of the significant issues discussed in the ensuing three essays. This is followed by a more extensive introductory essay in which the specialist of each realm lays out the main stakes in detail. The translation of the source(s) then follows and is often supplemented by extensive annotations to help readers untangle ambiguities. Each essay contains images pertaining to the chapter's subject matter. I have tried to select unpublished images and illustrated folios from lesser known manuscripts and albums as much as possible to extend the coverage of the visual representations of the era. A great many art history books can be consulted for iconic works, and every essay ends with a short list of major works within that field for further student reading and research.

Furthermore, the selected sources, all newly translated and contextualized in the accompanying essays, aim to reconsider, for example, such traditional views as the overall "decline" that these communities experienced: that Islamic philosophy deteriorated, literature was hackneyed, and the religious and political institutions lacked the vitality of the previous centuries. Moreover, although some views herein cast new light on long-standing issues, such as the history of Muslim-Christian relations, Shi'i-Sunni discord, the conception of religio-political authority, and the

politics of sanctioned violence, others unveil an interwoven intellectual world at a crucial epoch before the onset of the modern era. It is hoped that the historical significance of these subjects can be called forth in discussions in and outside of the university setting. May the collective effort of the scholarly community that produced this book and retrieved the voices of these learned communities reveal the interconnected nature of the human experience in all its material and spiritual manifestations.

Hani Khafipour

During a sojourn at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana

February 18, 2018

PART I. The Religious Landscape



FIGURE 1.1 *Mary and Jesus*

The image is part of an album (*muraqqa'*) of Persian and Indian calligraphy and paintings, probably compiled in the nineteenth century. The album holds thirty-four illustrations, featuring works of miniaturists such as Abu al-Hasan, Manuhar, Dawlat, and Sadiqi. It includes portraits of rulers and the elite, as well as illustrations from older manuscripts such as Sa'di's *Gulistan*. Samples of the works of renowned calligraphers such as 'Imad al-Hasani, 'Ali Riza 'Abbasi, Mir 'Ali, and 'Abd al-Rashid al-Daylami that bear their signature add to the luster of this album.

Source: Album of Persian and Indian calligraphy and paintings. Walters Ms. W.668, fol. W.668.10b.

Date: Late sixteenth century–nineteenth century

Place of origin: Iran and India

Credit: Walters Art Museum

1. Converts, Apostates, and Polytheists

The three empires presented in this book presided over one of the most religiously diverse stretches of land on Earth. The adherents of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), Hinduism, and a host of antinomian and heterodox groups within those religions, encountered various degrees of support, toleration, or persecution from the political establishments. The sources selected for this chapter reveal some of the main issues facing non-Muslim communities in these three empires.

Conversion was a heated issue that occupied religious and political authorities of the time. Although most Muslim jurists agreed that forced conversion is not permitted in Islam, the fatwas (religious authoritative rulings) that follow reveal that when everyday sociopolitical concerns of religious minorities met imperial objectives of expansion and domination, the permissibility of conversion became a matter of the legal opinion of jurists in the imperial service. This was further complicated given the legal status granted to *dhimmis* (people of the book; that is, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, but not Hindus) living under Muslim rule. Through examination of fatwas in the Ottoman domain issued by the highest religious authorities from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, in the second essay Nikolay Antov demonstrates how leading jurists' legal interpretations related to state policies regarding the Christian populations of Eastern Europe were maintained over the long term and consistently contributed to jurisprudential rigidity and an emerging legal conformism. Fatwas regulating the sociopolitical and economic activities of non-Muslim communities are a great source to investigate to learn how religious

minorities attempted to negotiate their legal protection, expand their rights, and avoid persecution.

In the broader framework of imperial politics, conversion can be viewed as a societal issue, but it was also a very personal experience for those involved. The fear of persecution or exclusion from socioeconomic opportunities was a common reality for many members of minority communities. Those who converted did not experience immediate relief but rather felt great anxiety caused by a crisis of faith, doubt as to the true path to salvation in the afterlife, and ostracism by family and friends. In the first essay, Rudi Matthee explores the personal dimension of conversion through examination of a rare autobiographical account left behind by 'Ali Akbar, an Armenian Christian merchant of Isfahan (the Safavid Empire's seventeenth-century capital) who converted to Shi'i Islam. This extraordinary source offers us a window into the tormented mental world of a man who abandoned one faith and adopted another.

In contrast to the Ottoman Empire, which was in constant warfare with Christian powers, the Safavids and the Mughals tolerated the presence of Jesuit missionaries, with the latter ruling over a vast population of Hindu subjects. In fact, at times Mughal emperors such as Akbar and Jahangir and the Safavid Shah 'Abbas exhibited a degree of religious tolerance rare for the era by any measure. Although the state's lenient policies regarding religious minorities oscillated from time to time and necessitated original political solutions, disputations in matters of creed between Christian and Muslim theologians mirrored the contestations of the earlier centuries in central Islamic lands. Such issues as the perceived polytheistic nature of the Trinity and challenging the authorship of the Bible and the accuracy of the Gospels (and contrasting it to the superiority of the Qur'an as an unaltered word of God) were evoked by the 'ulama' to elevate the imperial religion over all others.

In the final essay of the chapter, Corinne Lefèvre examines and translates a debate that took place in the intimate audience hall of the Mughal emperor Jahangir between the Jesuit Jerónimo Xavier and the Muslim jurist 'Abd al-Sattar, who later compiled them in the collection *Majalis-i Jahangiri*. Jahangir, following in the footsteps of his father Akbar, was keenly interested in all matters of faith, and even the abrogation of the Qur'an was not off limits in these nightly debates. Muslim-Christian disputations at the Mughal court were highly polemical and had the benefit of centuries of doctrinal scaffolding, but when it came to Hinduism, a great degree of inquisitiveness and interest dominated the discourse, which is revealed in Emperor Jahangir's conversation with a Brahman translated in this essay. Audrey Truschke's essay in chapter 3 further demonstrates this inquisitiveness by exploring Jahangir's debate with a Jain monk in which the emperor questions the merits of the monk's ascetic practices.

I. Confessions of an Armenian Convert

THE *I‘TIRAFNAMA* OF ABKAR (‘ALI AKBAR) ARMANI

RUDI MATTHEE

The past decade or so has seen a surge in scholarly interest in the topic of conversion in early modern Middle Eastern and Islamic history. The Ottoman Empire has received most of the attention in this expanding field.¹ To the extent that modern scholarship has addressed religious conversion in Iran, it has focused on the early Islamic period, the first centuries following the seventh-century Arab invasion and occupation, with a specific emphasis on the question of the poorly documented conditions under which, over time, the local population turned to the Muslim faith.² For the subsequent period, the eight centuries between the reign of the Seljuqs and the late Qajar dynasty, virtually no scholarship exists on the issue.³ As a result, we are largely in the dark about the process of Islamization in Iran following the decline of the Seljuqs.

The period of the Safavids, the dynasty that ruled Iran from 1501 until 1722, is no exception to this state of affairs. We are well informed about the actual efforts by the Safavid elite to become acquainted with the formal tenets of Twelver-Shi‘ism, and we have multiple sources for contemporary debates between the representatives of the various religions that made up Iran at the time. But we know little about the actual process by which a majority Sunni population turned to one adhering to the Shi‘i variant of Islam other than that it was accompanied by a great deal of pressure and violence. It was a gradual process that remained incomplete, and even in the late Safavid period a large Sunni minority continued to exist on the periphery.⁴

The situation is somewhat better in the case of non-Muslims, especially Christians, who converted to Islam in Safavid times. Here we have to distinguish between large-scale conversion, which was often forced and instrumental in nature, and individual cases of those who saw the light and submitted to Allah.

The case of the Christian Caucasus clearly falls into the first category. With the subjugation of large parts of the southern Caucasus, comprising Shirvan, Armenia, and Georgia, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Safavids added significant numbers of Christians to their subject population. Under Shah Tahmasb (r. 1524–1576) 30,000 Georgians are said to have been moved to Iran, and Iskandar Beg Munshi speaks of the settlement of 130,000 Georgians into Safavid territory in the wake of Shah ‘Abbas I’s 1616 expedition into the Caucasus.⁵ Toward the end of that ruler’s reign (1587–1629), more than 30,000 Georgian soldiers are said to have served in the Safavid army. At the same time, allegedly “not a household in the entire Persian Empire” was without Georgian slaves, men and women.⁶ By the 1680s, 20,000 Georgians—including Daghestanis and Circassians—were said to be living in Isfahan alone.⁷

As for Armenians, their numbers in Isfahan increased significantly when Shah ‘Abbas I deported thousands from the town of Julfa on the Aras River in Armenia to his new capital in 1604–1605. New Julfa, the suburb that the shah had constructed for them, by the mid-seventeenth century housed perhaps 30,000 Armenians, a substantial minority in an urban area totaling up to 500,000 people.⁸

Called *gulaman-i sarkar-i khassa* (slaves of the royal household), the Georgians and Armenians brought from their ancestral homelands to the Safavid metropole were made to convert to Islam as part of their recruitment, as a service nobility loyal to the shah, before they could assimilate into the Safavid society as army personnel and administrators. Such transformations thus were largely instrumental and situational, and the Georgians especially seemed to have worn their Islam rather lightly.⁹ With exceptions, the actual act of conversion remains anonymous and thus is beyond our ken.¹⁰

We are slightly better informed about non-ghulam conversions, and we even have some details about individual cases from seventeenth-century Iran. Most concern European Christians—merchants marrying Muslim women, prisoners of war, or renegades lured by money or sex—converting to Islam.¹¹ One high-profile case is that of the Georgian princess Ketevan. She agreed to become Shah ‘Abbas’s hostage to safeguard her country from Safavid attack. Informed that her son Taymuraz had rebelled, ‘Abbas, seeking revenge, forced her to convert. When she refused, she was tortured and executed at the shah’s orders, gaining her martyrdom in the Christian faith.¹² Another tragic case occurred in Isfahan in 1637 and involved a protestant Swiss clockmaker by the name of Johann Rudolf Stadler. He shot a man who had broken into his house, received the death penalty, but was offered a royal pardon if he agreed to adopt Islam. He rejected the offer and paid for his unwavering faith with his life.¹³ There is also the dramatic defection of two Portuguese Augustinian friars residing in Isfahan in the late seventeenth century,

Manuel de S. Maria and Ant3nio de Jesus. The first became Muslim “because of a woman”; the second converted after a quarrel with a Portuguese ambassador. Henceforth known as ‘Ali Quli Bayg “jadid al-Islam” (new convert to Islam), Ant3nio de Jesus entered Safavid state service, became a royal interpreter, and turned into a fierce anti-Christian polemicist.¹⁴

Information about reverse cases, involving the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, is sparse and fragmentary. In keeping with the experience elsewhere in the Islamic world, the number of Muslims the missionaries managed to convert in Safavid Iran was infinitesimal. The few who did convert exposed themselves to the resentment of the community they had left and, as we will see shortly, might incur the wrath of the authorities.¹⁵

The most famous case of Muslim conversion to Christianity took place outside Iran and is that of Uruch Beg, and his companions, who traveled to Spain as the head of a delegation sent by Shah ‘Abbas I in 1600 and chose to stay and convert to the Christian faith once they arrived in Valladolid. After being baptized and rechristened Don Juan of Persia, Uruch Beg and his fellow envoys became known in Spain as the “Persian Gentlemen.”¹⁶ A few decades later we hear of four visitors from Iran who adopted the Christian faith after arriving in Rome. Three chose to stay. One, named Pietro Cesi Persiano, studied at the Collegio Urbano and requested permission from the pope to return to the East to assist the Christian mission in his native Kurdistan.¹⁷

None of these cases generated self-narratives. Don Juan might seem the exception, but his is a travelogue rather than a confession account. This leaves us with the *I’tirafnama*, the “Book of Confession,” the subject of this chapter. Written by an Armenian from Isfahan by the name of Abkar who took the name ‘Ali Akbar following his conversion, the *I’tirafnama* is the only ego-document involving the conversion of an individual Christian in the Safavid period that has thus far come to light.¹⁸ His case, like that of Ant3nio de Jesus, is clearly of the “sudden,” “road to Damascus” variant on the process of turning to another faith.

Before we proceed with a summary of the contents, followed by the translation of the first twelve pages of the narrative, it is important to put this conversion into its proper historical context, with a focus on the Armenians as subjects and the period of the reign of Shah Sulayman (1666–1694).

CONVERSION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY IRAN

The record of the position of non-Shi‘i minorities, and particularly of Armenians in Safavid Iran, is mixed and replete with paradox. According to the rules of Shi‘ism, which precluded a lack of direct contact between Shi‘is and non-Shi‘is, *kuffar* were formally all *najis* (ritually impure). Yet the rules of *najasat* were all but ignored by the Safavid political elite, and Shah ‘Abbas I’s reign especially shows a clear pattern of tolerance consonant with that ruler’s secular will to power as well as his presumed

open-mindedness as expressed in his overall demeanor vis-à-vis his Christian subjects—which reportedly went so far as to allow former Christians who had converted to Islam to return to their faith.¹⁹

This toleration was both instrumental and conditional. Curious by nature, Shah ‘Abbas had a manifest interest in Christianity, its rituals, and iconography, but his stance vis-à-vis his Christian subjects and the Catholic missionaries that he allowed to operate in his realm was ultimately politically motivated and above all informed by a desire to maintain good relations with the Christian powers of Europe as potential allies against the Ottoman Turks. That examples of royal toleration and benevolence are interspersed with well-documented instances of repression of non-Shi‘is, including forced conversion and the execution of converts, in this period is thus hardly surprising. Like all early modern Iranian rulers, the shah faced pressure from clerical forces averse to “ritually polluted” non-Shi‘is and wary of the influx of Caucasian ghulams into the Safavid realm. A decision to mollify the ‘ulama’ may have been the basis of the decree that ‘Abbas issued not long before his death, giving any dhimmi apostate the right to inherit the “possession of the property of all his relatives, up to the seventh generation.”²⁰

But Shah ‘Abbas clearly knew how to keep the ‘ulama’ at bay and never just bowed to their demands. His real motivation for the instances of forced conversion appears to have been a growing frustration with Europe’s lack of seriousness in fighting the Ottomans, anger at missionary attempts to convert the Julfan Armenians (almost all of whom adhered to the Gregorian branch) to the Catholic faith and thus bring them under papal jurisdiction, and suspicion about their loyalty to the Safavid house.²¹ All this became urgent in the period from 1618 to 1622, a time when the shah’s relations with Portugal rapidly deteriorated, when he had given up on the Europeans as partners in the anti-Ottoman struggle, and when he began to see the European men of the cloth and his own Armenians as potentially a “fifth column,” a vanguard of the Portuguese or any other Christian power. In 1621, fed up with empty European promises with regard to military assistance against the Ottomans and frustrated with the arrogant behavior of the Portuguese in the Gulf, ‘Abbas turned against Iran’s Christian population. He launched a campaign to convert the Armenians in and around Isfahan other than the economically useful Julfans. The few Muslims who were known to have converted to Christianity bore the brunt of his displeasure. A group of five apostates were captured while trying to reach the Portuguese-controlled isle of Hormuz, to be put to death in gruesome ways at the shah’s orders, by impalement, disembowling or stoning. A year later the crisis in Luso-Iranian relations would culminate in a combined Anglo-Iranian operation to oust the Portuguese from Hormuz.²²

Shah ‘Abbas’s grandson and heir, Shah Safi I (r. 1629–1642), continued his predecessor’s general policy of toleration vis-à-vis Iran’s Christians. In 1633 he forbade all state officials to oppress Armenian merchants, admonishing them not to obstruct their movements in the country and to lend them assistance without unduly taxing them.²³ Six years later, the conclusion of the Peace of Zuhab (Qasr-i Shirin)

with the Ottomans definitively obviated any need to accommodate Western powers and their agents, the Catholic missionaries. This made the Safavid less interested in courting the latter, yet the altered conditions are not reflected in any marked upswing in pressure on domestic Christians.

The reign of Safi's successor, Shah 'Abbas II (1642–1666), offers a mixed picture with regard to official attitudes vis-à-vis religious minorities, similar to conditions under his great-grandfather. By all accounts, the shah was personally no less tolerant than his two forebears and not inclined to restrict the religious freedoms of the People of the Book, including their freedom of conscience.²⁴ Like them, he also resisted pressure from the clerics. As the French merchant-traveler Jean Chardin put it, but for the shah and his secular entourage, the 'ulama' long ago would have forced all of Iran's Christians and Jews to convert to Islam.²⁵ Yet especially in his later years, Shah 'Abbas II was either unwilling or unable to prevent the issuance of restrictions on non-Shi'i Muslims. The restrictions that were issued mostly appear to have been composed at the initiative of hardline grand viziers. Some of these may have acted out of conviction in their antiminority policies; other perhaps sought to establish their credentials as representatives of a religiously inspired state; all were beholden to clerical factions in the ruling order. The first, Mirza Muhammad "Saru" Taqi (in office 1634–1645), constantly urged (albeit unsuccessfully) the two shahs he served to enact measures against Christians. Muhammad Taqi's successor, Khalifa Sultan (Sultan al-'Ulama, in office 1645–1654), a cleric who combined an aversion to Christians with a fascination with the tenets of their faith, had Armenian artisans and manufacturers in Isfahan evicted to make room for Muslims, and suggested that Christians and Jews wear distinctive clothing.²⁶ Conditions hardly improved under the vizierate of Muhammad Beg (1654–1661).²⁷ In 1657, in a measure reportedly instigated by mullahs concerned about ritual impurity, Isfahan's Armenians were forced to decamp to New Julfa, across the river.²⁸ The same period saw a reaffirmation of the inheritance law.²⁹ In the Safavid-controlled Caucasus and especially in Nakhjavan, this is said to have resulted in much harassment of Armenians, including mounting pressure to convert.³⁰

The financial wherewithal of the Armenians, or at least that of the community of New Julfa, enabled them to disburse enough money to prevent implementation of several of the above measures and proposals. Besides, the Julfans could fall back on influential support in the person of the queen mother, who served as the patron of New Julfa and enjoyed parts of its income. In short, "the Armenian Christian communities held enough political bargaining power and economic resources for safety and welfare to prevent massive defections from their ranks."³¹ Iran's Jews, totaling perhaps 100,000, had no such institutional backing.³² Scattered all over Iran—from Tabriz and Isfahan to Lar, and from Hamadan to Kong—they were given a choice between conversion and expulsion in this period. In response, they, too, spent money to avert the worst, but being less resourceful than the Armenians, many turned *anusim*, pretending to convert, and hundreds were reportedly killed as well.³³

During the reigns of Shah Sulayman (1666–1694) and Shah Sultan Husayn (1694–1722), the position of Iran's Armenians—indeed for all non-Shi'i Muslims—markedly deteriorated. This was mostly a function of weaker rulers who were less able (or willing) to stand up to the voices of intolerance in their entourage, either from hardline clerics or from zealous and opportunistic administrators. As before, only in intensified form, growing impecuniousness on the part of the state played a role as well in the form of growing fiscal pressure on vulnerable “minorities.”

The sources offer various examples of Armenian conversion under Shah Sulayman. Chardin relates the story of how in September 1666 the *kalantar* (mayor) of New Julfa apostatized. The *nazir* (superintendent of the royal household) attended the circumcision ceremony with a brother and a confidant of the shah, after which the fresh convert was given a new name, Muhammad Piri. Following the performance of this ritual, a dinner was organized in his honor. Yet the food was brought from the home of Agha Zaman, the supervisor of the queen mother's household, because the family at large had not converted, rendering their home ritually unclean. One month later the same Agha Zaman gave Muhammad Piri his daughter in marriage.³⁴

Five years later, in 1671, Shah Sulayman is said to have persuaded Khaja Alapiri, who at that point served as *kalantar* of New Julfa, to convert. He apostatized in front of the shah, the grand vizier, Shaykh 'Ali Khan, and the Shaykh al-Islam of Isfahan, Muhammad Baqir Sabzavari, and in return received a rich robe of honor from the ruler.³⁵ Another high-profile apostasy took place in May of the same year following a dispute between an Armenian priest from the village of Peria near Isfahan, named Yovhan, who had gone to Istanbul to be consecrated bishop without the permission of Bishop Stepanos Julayeci of Peria. Upon his return to the Safavid capital, Yovhan escaped punishment by seeking refuge with the Shaykh al-Islam. He next apostatized with fifteen coreligionists who were triumphantly paraded through town by the Muslims of Isfahan. He next brought charges against the Armenian Church and its clergy. The result was the imprisonment of the bishop of New Julfa, the destruction of the newly built monastery of Hazar Jarib, and the imposition of a heavy tax on New Julfa's churches.³⁶

Later years saw more examples of such pressure. In 1678 the 'ulama' of Isfahan declared the Armenians and Jews responsible for the terrible drought that afflicted large parts of Iran that year. Several rabbis had their bellies slit, and the Jews of Isfahan at large only avoided a similar fate by paying 600 tumans. The first report about the enforcement of the rules of *najasat* was in 1683. Early that year, Aslams Beg, the nephew of Mansur Khan, the *qullar-aqasi* (head of the slave regiments), and a Georgian ghulam, was appointed *darughha*, mayor of Isfahan. Known as an enemy of the Armenians, he issued a ban on non-Muslims leaving their houses and appearing in public at times of rain lest they pollute believers. The ban was rescinded after the wealthy merchants of New Julfa sent a delegation to the queen mother.³⁷ Such bans would be reissued several more times in later years, especially under Shah Sultan Husayn.

CONVERSION: MOTIVATIONS, ADVANTAGES, AND DRAWBACKS

Vera Moreen, discussing the issue of Jewish conversion in the late Safavid period, usefully distinguishes three possible motives for the decision to switch faiths on the part of individuals or groups: (1) a conviction in the truth of another revelation; (2) an attraction to the material benefits conversions might provide; and (3) a fear of actual or threatened persecution.³⁸ As Noel Malcolm puts it talking about the sixteenth-century Christian-Muslim encounter in the Mediterranean, “to modern minds, the term ‘conversion’ suggests a strenuous process of changing one’s theological beliefs, which may not be applicable in many of these cases.”³⁹ Most of the examples given in the above outline suggest that in late Safavid Iran conviction was not the primary motive for those who adopted Islam. Indeed, the great majority of conversions seem to have been less than voluntary, caused by intimidation and fear or motivated by opportunism or venality.

Many Christians, in Safavid Iran as elsewhere in Muslim-ruled environments, over time converted to evade the *jiz’ya*, the poll tax levied on dhimmis. Conversion served as protection against other forms of (mis)appropriation as well. In many cases, Christians are said to have adopted Islam because their daughters had been taken to the shah’s harem and married off to lower court officials who then claimed the property of the fathers for being the only legitimate heirs.⁴⁰ The acrimonious disputes arising from the split within the Armenian community between Gregorians and Catholics were often the cause of friction that might lead to conversion as a way of seeking protection against punishment from the Muslim authorities. An example is the *kalantar* of New Julfa in the 1680s, a Gregorian Armenian who worked against the wealthy Armenian-Catholic Shahrimeanean brothers and who helped carry off Armenian girls to the shah’s harem.⁴¹ At times, apostasy also served as a shield against utter destitution. Nicolas Sanson, a French Capuchin missionary who resided in Iran during the reign of Shah Sulayman, recounts how the shah allowed a group of Armenians, who had converted out of financial hardship to escape the burden of the *jiz’ya*, to return to their original faith, forgiving them their debt.⁴² The French Jesuit Jean-Baptiste de la Maze, traveling through Qazvin in late 1698, tells us that the town was home to some thirty Armenian families who eked out a living. During de la Maze’s stay, six Armenian cobblers apostatized because of a ban the shah had issued against Muslims doing business with Christian artisans.⁴³

Money was at stake in the vast majority of conversion cases. Several observers note how Armenians would dodge the inheritance laws by selling their property to a Muslim, either maintaining ownership or with the understanding the latter would resell it to their sons.⁴⁴ The archbishop of Nakhjavan in 1638 mentioned the lure of money as a major reason for the high rate of conversions among the local Armenian population.⁴⁵ Often, darker motives involving greed and revenge were at work. In 1621,

the Shaykh al-Islam of Isfahan, Baha' al-Din 'Amili, issued a fatwa stipulating that a convert to Islam should inherit the property of all of his relatives up to the seventh degree.⁴⁶ Shah 'Abbas I confirmed this ordinance in 1628, shortly before his death. Some twenty-five years later it was estimated that about 50,000 Christians had abandoned their faith and adopted Islam to lay their hands on their relatives' wealth.⁴⁷ In 1664 the French king, Louis XIV, wrote a letter to Shah 'Abbas II in which he sought to have the decree revoked, but this request was not successful.⁴⁸ Engelbert Kaempfer, writing in the mid-1680s, drew attention to what he considered the shameful habit of Armenians to convert to Shi'i Islam in order to appropriate not only their fathers' inheritance but the property of the entire extended family. This practice, Kaempfer claimed, gave rise to endless legal battles. These were, however, mostly fruitless because the plaintiff was legally held to have his family relationship confirmed by fifty witnesses who had never been found to lie. This proved to be nearly impossible, and the Safavid courts invariably rejected such cases.⁴⁹

The Armenian chronicler Arakel of Tabriz similarly refers to Armenian apostates who "give bribes to the Muslims and use them as witnesses against other Christians, dragging them in front of Muslim judges and demanding anything they can imagine." These judges tended to side with the apostates, allowing the latter to extract money and property from their former coreligionists.⁵⁰ Chardin confirms such bias with his story about Muhammad Quli Khan, the *divanbegi* (chief justice) in the late reign of 'Abbas II. Claiming that this magistrate would have exterminated all Armenians were it not for the shah's protection, Chardin insists that he condemned practically all Armenians brought before his bench while hardly listening to their case, saying that it was enough for an Armenian to be brought before the court for his head to be smashed. One understands the relief the Christians of Isfahan experienced when he died in 1666 and his successor proved to be radically different.⁵¹ Yet conditions did not improve under Shah Sulayman.

ABKAR'S CONVERSION

The *I'tirafnama* is not a scholarly work. Abkar was a merchant, and Persian was most likely not his native language. The text is rather basic, factual, and replete with spelling mistakes, suggesting little formal education. In the words of Alberto Tiburcio, it reads more like a picaresque novella than a full-fledged autobiography.⁵²

In probing 'Ali Akbar's narrative as a conversion story, we may cite David Wasserstein's observation that autobiographical accounts by converts "tend to be self-serving, and, like many texts of interreligious polemic, have more the character of set-piece literary constructs than of genuine spiritual journeying."⁵³

The text as it appears to us seems straightforward enough. 'Ali Akbar sets the tone for his conversion with a graphic reference to the Gospels that in its initially scathing tone is worthy of a religious man turned atheist: "He went to the church and the priest quoting the Gospel told him that God saw that I was hungry and He fed me;

I was naked, and He clothed me; I was sick, and He cured me; I was in prison, and He set me free. Yet, no one feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, comes to assistance of the sick and cures them; and no one sets those in prison free.”

‘Ali Akbar’s narrative also hews to the conversion model by being filled with dozens of dreams.⁵⁴ Dreams, of course, are as ubiquitous as they are esteemed in Islam. Dreams as conduits to the divine existed in ancient Egypt, the classical Greek world, as well as in early Christianity. But only in Islam did they become separated from divination and acquire a sacral meaning, probably due to being so closely associated with the experience of the Prophet himself, who is said to have been in a dreamlike state for six months prior to receiving his first revelation.⁵⁵ Dreams in Islam indeed may be seen as a continuation of revelation in the absence of prophetic revelation. In the words of Rainer Brunner, they are an “acknowledged partial substitute for prophecy, enabling the dreamer to partake in divine inspiration and making sure that this illumination . . . continues to find its way into the world after the disappearance of the seal of the prophets.”⁵⁶ As Annemarie Schimmel puts it: “the greatest boon that one can hope for in this life [is] the vision of the Prophet in a dream. Such dreams play an extraordinary rôle in Islamic piety to this day. They are always true, for Satan can never assume the Prophet’s form.”⁵⁷

Shi’ism knows a particularly rich oneiric tradition whose relevance remains virtually unbroken until today.⁵⁸ At no time was this relevance greater than in the Safavid period. Indeed, among the Safavids, dreams in which either the Prophet or Imam ‘Ali appears played an important role, beginning with the founder of the Sufi order, Shaykh Safi al-Din, whose dreams are said to have foretold the glorious future of his family. Safavid shahs, most notably Isma‘il (r. 1501–1524) and Tahmasb (r. 1524–1576) continued to have dreams either presaging their preordained role as the representative of the Imam, his protection, victory in battle, or explaining away defeat and justifying the execution of family members.⁵⁹ We have a few examples of Safavid dreams that, like those of ‘Ali Akbar, involve conversion. One is the case of Luarsab, brother of Gurgin Mirza, who in 1688 converted to Islam on his way to Kirman after seeing Imam ‘Ali in a dream.⁶⁰

Notwithstanding the outward piety, it is impossible to gauge the true motivation and intent of Abkar’s conversion from his text, which does not provide any clues as to whether his decision to adopt Islam was a sincere one or one of convenience. By the same token, it remains unclear what Abkar’s motive was in writing his narrative (in Persian) and who his intended readers were.

There are no indications that Abkar converted for monetary gain. Nor does mere convenience seem to have been at play. On the contrary, by converting, Abkar alienated himself from his original community, incurring the wrath and resentment of its members. The New Julfan trading community, in particular, which conducted its international trade on the basis of religiously underpinned trust, would have ostracized him. His relatives in Venice indeed spurned Abkar, denying him lodging when they learned of his conversion. He was also arrested in retaliation for the reported abuse of Christians in the Safavid realm. Freed from prison through

his brother's intercession, he fled to Istanbul, but there he got into trouble as well. The Ottoman Janissaries suspected him of being a *rafidi* (heretic), that is, a Shi'i. He thus returned to Iran.

In the absence of any contrary information, we should therefore assume that 'Ali Akbar adopted Islam out of conviction. We may get a little closer to the origins of the event by situating it in its proper context, which is that of the above-mentioned growing pressure on non-Muslims to convert. As he himself indicates, Abkar converted during the reign of Shah Sulayman. From his reference to that ruler as "maghfur" (deceased), it is equally clear that he wrote his work under Sulayman's successor, Shah Sultan Husayn.⁶¹

The year in which Abkar became a Muslim remains unstated, but it can be pinpointed with some precision from various references in the text. One is a lapse of fourteen to fifteen months between his conversion and the arrival of the news of the conversion of the above-mentioned Aqa Piri at the time when Abkar—now 'Ali Akbar—resided in Izmir. As stated, the conversion of this magistrate had taken place in 1673, clearly after Abkar's conversion. Given a traveling time from Isfahan to Izmir of some two months, the news probably reached the Armenian community in the latter city in the same year. Since Abkar headed for the Ottoman Empire shortly after he became a Muslim, it is reasonable to assume that his own conversion took place in 1672 as well.⁶²

This supposition, in addition to the occurrence of a few additional dates in the *I'tirafnama*, allows us to further follow the trajectory. 'Ali Akbar states that he stayed in Izmir for nine months, and subsequently set sail for Venice, where he arrived four months later—with no explanation for the long duration of the voyage. This would take us to c. 1675. He then reports how he remained in Venice and the lands of Christianity for seven to eight years, bringing us to c. 1683–84. Such a time frame is confirmed in the two instances where he states that eleven years had gone by since his conversion.⁶³

Just as in the case of the above-mentioned kalantar, or perhaps as part of the same event, Abkar's conversion became an official affair. When it came to the attention of the shah, the latter ordered the quarter of 'Abbasabad to be illuminated for forty days. After the forty days had passed, no one was allowed to mount a horse in the quarter. Only the newly converted Armenian *jadid al-Islam* was put on a horse and brought to the 'Ali Qapu.

TRANSLATION

The I'tirafnama of Abkar ('Ali Akbar) Armani

I swear that if I lie God should curse me; and let those who are hypocrites and heretics be the object of God's wrath and the execration of the prophet if they lie. I went to the church. The priest told me that the Gospels tell us that God said:

I was hungry and he fed me; I was naked, and he clothed me; I was sick, and he came to visit me; I was imprisoned; and he comforted me.

And he said that I am not talking about myself, but about a group that is hungry and no one fed them; and they were naked, and no one clothed them; and they were sick, and no one came to visit them; they were imprisoned, and no one comforted them. And he says that he who clothed a naked person clothed me, and he who fed a hungry person fed me, and he who went to see a sick person, went to see me; and he who comforted someone gave me comfort; and he who has done all these things will find reward with me.

When I heard these words, my grandfather was still alive. It was his habit and principle to lock the door behind which foodstuff and such were stored, and I went and opened the door and took out as much bread and other food as I could and gave it to the poor. My grandfather, my grandmother, and my parents scolded me saying that I should not do such a thing; I responded by saying that God had ordered this and that I gave this in the name of God; you will forgive me for this.

While I was still an unbeliever, I heard from my grandmother and my relatives that at the time when my mother was pregnant with me, she would go up on the roof to sleep. She then saw something and fainted. She called my father, my grandmother, and other relatives and when they came upstairs, she was unconscious. They brought her back to consciousness and asked her what had happened. She responded by saying that she had gone to sleep and saw how a light hanging from the sky by a hair descended, struck her belly, and went up again. She had fainted from dread. When I heard these words from my relatives, I asked my mother personally. She said that they spoke the truth, that this happened while she was pregnant with me.

When I was about twelve years old, my maternal grandmother who was 115 years of age one day fell from a high spot, and for twenty-seven days she did not say a word or eat anything, causing people to write her off. On day twenty-seven she called me, took my hand, and told me: "Abkar, you will become Muslim," and after uttering these words she expired. My mother and my aunt cursed her for not having died sooner.

At the time when I was still an unbeliever, I used to complain to God, asking him not to send me to hell. While my people always engaged in gambling and similar activities, I never followed them in this, and my thoughts were always with God and the fires of hell. At that time, when they brought the news that my father had died in India and our household was in mourning, I had a dream on Thursday night in which a thunderous voice came down from heaven. I got up to see where the sound was coming from. But I could neither move forward nor backward. I looked and saw a lit candle suspended from the sky with oil inside of it. Once again I heard a thunderous sound coming from the heavens. I looked and saw the sky splitting open. A horse made of light descended from the sky; it went around the house once, and when it reached the candle I was so overcome that I started trembling. The horse next brought out its tongue and lit the candle and from the

rays of that horse the door and the walls and the trees were illuminated and from the candle something fell on my head, and try as I might, I could not move my head in any direction.

An hour later another sound, even more thunderous than the last one, came from the sky. I looked and saw how a person made of light descended from the sky and mounted the horse, which lit the world with its rays in such a way that aside from this light I wasn't able to make out anything. When the person came near me, he told me to give him my hand. While I was frightened, he took my hand, and while being bent over he put me on his back. I implored him to tell me who he was that he had taken my hand. He replied that he was a light coming from God who has created the world and that he had given me a place on his back so no harm should come to me. As soon as he said this I awoke from my sleep. I went to tell the story to my grandmother, and she went to tell my grandfather the dream that Abkar had seen.

One week later on Thursday night I again had a dream. I was sleeping in a courtyard with my head facing the qibla, and I looked at the sky. I heard a strange sound coming from the sky, and I grabbed the back of my head with both my hands, and however much I tried, I was unable to lift them up and put them somewhere else. A great fear and trembling engulfed me. I looked and saw how an infinite multitude of angels had lined up all the way to the sky on both sides, all of them lifting up their heads in the direction of the sky.

And once again, a sound louder than before rose up. My fear intensified again. I saw how the sky was torn asunder and how a throne of light appeared and how on the throne was seated a person whose light illuminated the world, and the king, a piece of timber in his hand, got up from the throne and came to me, and I wailed and I clamored, and he touched my belly three times with the wood, and I woke up. I went to see my grandmother to tell her, and she told my grandfather, who was surprised. He said that it was a good sign. That same hour he sent for and brought out a horned billy goat, took it to the church, and slaughtered it. They then brought the blood and smeared it on the door of the house.

When I was seventeen or eighteen I had a dream in which I went to the church that my grandfather had built and wished to go through a door when I came near the courtyard where my grandfather was buried, and saw that the stone that had been placed on his tomb had broken into two pieces. I angrily asked myself who could have broken my grandfather's epitaph. When I came closer, I saw my grandfather, with closed eyes, asleep, dressed in Islamic garb and with a white new turban on his head, his two hands folded on his chest, in the one a wooden stick and in the other a book. I asked myself why my grandfather was dressed in Muslim clothes. When he heard me, he opened his eyes and looked at me. He told me, "Son, come closer." I told him, "You died; you want to take me with you too?" He said, "No, don't be afraid," and he got up and took my hand and put his own hand on my shoulder, and said, "By the right of the creator who has created 17,000 worlds, among all my children you will be the only one who will go

to heaven. You will go to heaven and no one else will.” I woke up scared. Three months after I had seen this dream, I entered the circle of Islam.

My conversion to Islam unfolded in this fashion. One day a shaykh by the name of Mu'min sent one of his disciples who had risen to a high spiritual rank [to have merited the status of *khalifa*] and invited me to the house of the governor of the district of 'Abbas Abad. He [the disciple] then began to missionize. I answered him rhetorically, “It is quite enough that you have become a Muslim, you now want to convert *me* to Islam?” After this exchange Shaykh Mu'min said that if there is any place in the Gospels where this faith is called the truthful faith, you should become Muslim. I answered by saying that if the Gospels maintain that Islam is the truth, I will become Muslim. And I will not return home. Shaykh Mu'min got up and brought out a copy of the Gospels, opened it and gave it to me, telling me to read what was written.

I read how it was written in the Gospels that the twelve apostles decided to go to the lake to fish. They brought a net with them to do so. When they reached the bank of the lake, while sitting in their boat, they threw their net to the left. They did not catch any fish. Suddenly a voice rose saying, “Oh Peter, throw your net to the right.” And this Peter, whose rank was higher than that of the other eleven apostles, looked up and saw the Lord Jesus in the middle of the lake, and threw himself in the water. The Lord Jesus shouted at them that he should not throw himself in the water since he would drown. But he had already jumped, so that the Lord Jesus came near him, took his hand, and pulled him out of the water and got him back to the boat.

And John the author of the Gospel sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus bareheaded, and the Lord put his hand on his head and John began to cry. The Lord Jesus asked him why he was crying. John said, “Because you will be going to heaven soon and did not ask me for anything with regard to prayer and veneration.” The Lord Jesus said that in prayer one should recite the *fatiha* (the first chapter of the Qur'an) three times, and John began to weep again. And the Lord Jesus asked him, “Why do you weep?” He replied, “Please stay here for a while longer.”

The Lord said that, “until I go God Almighty will not send Makhitarist, which in Arabic means the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) and the Paraclete is the blessed name of Mohammad.” When I saw this passage in the Gospel, I said that I wouldn't go home and that I would become Muslim here and now, and I remained at the home of the mayor of 'Abbas Abad.⁶⁴

The mayor made a request to (the since deceased) Shah Sulayman, and that just ruler ordered that 'Abbas Abad should be illuminated for a period of forty days and that afterward other than the new convert to Islam no one should be allowed to mount a horse. When the forty days had passed, I was put on a horse and taken to the Ali Qapu, where the *fatiha* was read. Afterward I was taken to the mosque and there, too, the *fatiha* was read, and from there I went to the house of Mirza 'Ali Riza—may God have mercy on him—and once again he administered upon me the twofold declaration of the Islamic faith.⁶⁵ I then returned to 'Abbas Abad.

The Reaction of the Armenians of Julfa to Abkar's Conversion

The priests and magistrates of Julfa came and mumbled to find out how come I had forsaken the Lord Jesus and gone off into a futile direction. I responded by saying that this was not a path of futility because I had read in the Gospel that this faith is based on the truth and that I therefore had adopted it. They said that what the Lord Jesus had said concerned the Holy Spirit; but I said that the first meaning was the Paraclete, and only later the Holy Spirit had been introduced. Still, I came to doubt whether the faith of the Lord Jesus wasn't better after all; and I cried secretly day and night about why I had chosen Islam. I prayed to the Mother Mary, and I cried.

One night I had a dream that I was at home standing in the direction of the sun, with no one around, and I looked up at the sky facing the sun and all of a sudden a voice came down from the sky. I was filled with tremendous fear. I tried to escape but was unable to move. I screamed. I saw how my little aunt appeared. She said, "Why do you scream?" I said, "However much I try to leave, I am caught and cannot move." She then faded from my sight.

As soon as she had left the sky split open. And a nebulous shade of light became visible and a bunch of angels were holding the edges of the cloud, with one hand the cloud and with one hand a lit candle whose light illuminated the world, and in melodious voices they sang something in the Arabic language that made me dissolve. In the middle of the cloud Lady Mary appeared from head to chest with a crown made of light on her head; and the angels brought down the cloud and placed it on top of the wall of the house. An immense fear engulfed me. I wanted to flee but could not move. I saw that there was no way out. I began to wail. I saw how from the midst of that cloud and angels, candle in hand, she came toward me, telling me to take the candle. I was afraid and told her not to come near because I was afraid. She told me not to be afraid and gave me the candle, and I asked her who this light-adorned lady was. She said, "Lady Mary." She said, "This faith is based on the truth and that you should not be sad." I then awoke from my sleep.

I told my relatives who came to see me about this dream. In response they said that a dream doesn't mean anything, that it is the work of the devil, and that I shouldn't give it any credence. They threw my heart into doubt and, distraught, I cried day and night, wishing I would not go to hell. All this happened in the house of Shaykh Mahdi in the Bagh-i Jannat.

I spent three months in this state of distress. The doctor prescribed a phlebotomy. My mother came to me just at the time when the doctor had cut my veins in seven places because no blood had emerged and I had just fainted. When my mother saw this, she started tearing at her face and left, and when Shaykh Mahdi saw this, he began to cry and went and brought the Qur'an, and he made me face the *qibla* and put my head on his knee and over my head started reciting the Qur'an.

While existing in the world of the unconscious, I found myself in the house of Khaja Piri, on the upper floor, without anyone else being around. I was afraid and wanted to come down via the ladder. Having come halfway, I saw a luminous person in white clothes who said to me, "Son, come near me." I asked him who he was. He said, "Come and I will tell you who I am." When I came down, he told me, "I am Muhammad in whom you have put your faith," and he put his blessed hand on my forehead, and blew on it and told me, "I will heal you. Get immersed in the faith of Islam that you have adopted." And I found healing and came to, and at that moment they brought out my mother and she was happy to see me in my state.

The Voyage of 'Ali Akbar to Venice and Other Lands of the Franks

After two months I went back home and my relatives urged me to go to Izmir on a business trip to visit my great uncle. I accepted and departed, and when I arrived in Izmir fourteen or fifteen months had lapsed since the day I had seen the Lord Mohammad in my dreams and a messenger from Julfa arrived in those parts. He brought the news that Khaja Piri had converted to Islam, and when I heard this, I said to myself that the fact that I had seen the Prophet in my dreams was the reason why Khaja Piri had turned Muslim as well.

I stayed in Izmir for a period of nine months. One day my grand uncle told me that he would send me to Venice. I had heard people talk about Venice. I accepted and set out by ship. I reached Venice after a period of four months and stayed and traveled there and in other corners of the Frankish world for seven or eight years, learning various skills from them. And when I had perfected the skills I had learned, I wished to go home.

My relatives and the magistrates of New Julfa has written to their agents in the West that if 'Ali Akbar intends to return to these lands, he will be slandered and should be either killed or imprisoned, so he can't come. Someone by the name of Aqa Mal, the agent of one of the magistrates of Julfa, and one, the agent of Avadik Javahiri whose name was Aswazadar, and a person named Safar Jadri; these three wrote to the Doge of Venice that a resident of Julfa from the realm of the Iranian ruler was staying here, someone who on several occasions had called Jesus unworthy and who had killed several Christians and was a thief. The ruler had ordered my arrest while I, unaware of all this, was watching a spectacle in the square during one of their holidays.

It is their custom that they bring a black cloth for someone who is condemned to death and put it over his head, after which they grab his arms and feet and turn him upside down. So sixty judicial officers snuck up on me and threw a black cloth over my head and carried me away like that, and incarcerated me in a prison for those who are condemned to death. The prison has seven levels and each one has an iron door, and they threw me in the lower level. I didn't have anything to eat for seven days, and cried. There was a hole in the prison through which they finally handed me something after which they closed the hole again.

I spent thirty-seven days without knowing if it was day or night; that's how dark it was. It is the custom of the unbelievers to keep their prisoners locked up for up to forty days; and if they die, so be it; and if they don't, they are brought out to be executed. I got my news from the ones who brought me food to eat; they told me it had been thirty-seven days.

And at the same time that I didn't know if it was day or night I had a dream in which I saw the Prophet of God in the same way as I had seen him in the house of Khaja Piri. He came to me and called me twice, "Ali Akbar." In the midst of the dream, I opened my eyes in the middle of the prison and saw His Lordship [Muhammad] who said, "Don't be afraid, by God Almighty, after one-hundred days, I will free you from these infidels. . . ."

On the fortieth day I saw how they opened the door to the prison. I was taken out and brought before a tribunal. When the eyes of the magistrate fell on me, he excused himself and asked for forgiveness that they had imprisoned me, an innocent man, and that I had almost been executed. The verdict was that the group that had imprisoned me would be arrested, but they had fled. Now that the suspicion was gone, I chose a house in which to reside.

It is the custom in these parts to erect buildings of more than one level. I took a room on the upper level to see if I would be able to apply the skills I had learned. The owner of the house was a servant of the ruler, and his wife and daughter were with me so that I didn't have to be alone.

The city of Venice has deep canals running through its alleyways so that they make deliveries by boat rather than with mules; and the canals have sidewalks on both sides so the people can move by walking. Mules are hardly seen on these sidewalks, and of Muslims there is not a trace.

The wife of the house owner left her daughter with me and went out. And I sat there and worked while the girl did her needle work. I was working holding a pen in my hand when I heard a sweet voice coming down from the heavens. I threw the pen down and listened to what was the call to prayer. I wondered where this voice was coming from since there were no Muslims around. I stood up and opened the door that opened toward the sea.

By the Oneness of God and the message of Muhammad the Prophet of Allah and by the truth of the immaculate Imams I swear that I opened that door and heard that sound coming from the heavens belonging to a person who recited the call to prayer from beginning to end. I was stunned, fell down, and fainted. The girl started screaming and the neighbors came around and her mother arrived as well. They brought me back to consciousness; the wife of the owner of the house asked what had happened, and the girl confirmed that she, too, had heard the voice and how I had gotten up and opened the door, had looked around, and had fallen and fainted, and how upon her screams people had gathered; and I recounted the good tidings of Islam in front of the woman.

NOTES

1. Book-length studies include Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam. Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam. Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Sarah Bowen Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Also see the essays in Mercedes Garcia-Arena, ed., *Conversions Islamiques: Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéens/Islamic Conversions. Religious Identities in Mediterranean Islam* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 2002).
2. See Richard Bulliet's pioneering *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1979); Michael Morony, "The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment," in *Conversion and Continuity. Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. M. Gervers and J. Bikhazi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 135–50; and Andrew D. Magnusson, "Zoroastrian Fire Temples and the Islamisation of Sacred Space in Early Islamic Iran," in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 102–17.
3. Mehrdad Amanat, *Jewish Identities in Iran: Resistance and Conversion to Islam and the Baha'i Faith* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011). For the Safavid period, see Kathryn Babaian, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 428–29, 439–73.
4. For the evolving relationship between power and religion in Safavid Iran, see Rula Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004). The Ottoman ambassador Ahmad Dürri Efendi, who visited Iran in 1721, shortly before the fall of Isfahan to the Afghans, famously claimed that one third of Iran's population still adhered to the Sunni faith. See Ahmad Dourry Efendy, *Relation de Dourry Efendy, ambassadeur de la Porthe Otomane auprès du roy de Perse*, ed. L. Langlès, trans. M. de Fiennes, (Paris: B. J. Sajou, 1810), 54.
5. Hasan Bik Rumlu, *Ahsan al-tavarikh*, ed. 'Abbas al-Husayn Nava'i (Tehran: Intisharat-i Zarin, 1357/1976), 492; Eskandar Beg Monshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, ed. and trans. Roger Savory, 2 vols. paginated as one (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 1116.
6. Pietro della Valle, "Informatione della Georgia data alla Santita di nostro Signore Papa Urbano VIII," in J. Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux qui n'ont point esté publiées . . .* (Paris: Jacques Langlois, 1663), vol. 1: 8.
7. Engelbert Kaempfer, *Exotic Attractions in Persia, 1684-1688. Travels & Observations*, trans. and ed. Willem Floor and Colette Ouahes (Washington D.C.: Mage, 2018), 144.
8. Edmund Herzig, "The Armenian Merchants of New Jolfa, Isfahan: A Study in Pre-Modern Asian Trade" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1991), 80–81. Whatever the true number, it pales before the number of Christians in Ottoman urban centers,

beginning with the capital, Istanbul. The seventeenth-century traveler Evliya Celebi famously gave Galata, the “non-Muslim” part of Istanbul, a population of 200,000 “infidels” as opposed to 60,000 Muslims.

9. Vladimir Minorsky, “Introduction,” in *Tadhkirat al-Muluk, A Safavid Administrative Manual* (1940; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 19.
10. For individual cases of ghulams converting to Islam (and occasionally reverting to their original faith), see Giorgio Rota, “Conversion to Islam (and Sometimes a Return to Christianity) in Safavid Persia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Conversion and Islam in the Early Modern Mediterranean: the Lure of the Other*, ed. Claire Norton (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017), 50–76.
11. Rota, “Conversion to Islam,” 51, 57–59.
12. See John Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602–1747)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 197–238.
13. Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte Neue Beschreibung der Muscowitischen und Persischen Reyse* (Schleswig: Johan Holwein, 1656; repr., Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1971), 520–22.
14. Rota, “Conversion to Islam,” 59; Francis Richard, “Un augustin portugais renégat apologiste de l’Islam chiite au début du XVIII^e siècle,” *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 1 (1984), 73–85; Alberto Tiburcio Urquiola, “Convert Literature, Interreligious Polemics, and the ‘Signs of Prophethood’ Genre in Late Safavid Iran (1694–1722): The Work of ‘Ali Quli Jadid al-Islam (d. circa 1722)” (PhD diss., McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, 2014); and Alberto Tiburcio Urquiola, “Muslim-Christian Polemics and Scriptural Translation in Safavid Iran: ‘Ali-Qoli Jadid al-Eslam and His Interlocutors,” *Iranian Studies* 50 (2017): 247–69. For the eighteenth century, there is the example of Isma‘il Qazvini, who converted from Judaism to Christianity. See Dennis Halft, “Isma‘il Qazvini: A Twelfth/Eighteenth-Century Jewish Convert to Imami Shi‘ism and His Critique of Ibn Ezra’s Commentary on the Four Kingdoms (Daniel 2:31–45),” in *Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition: The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims*, ed. M. L. Hjalm (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 280–304.
15. H. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia: The Safavids and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, 2 vols. paginated as one (London: Spottiswood, 1939; London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 259–60.
16. See G. Le Strange, *Don Juan of Persia. A Shi‘ah Catholic* (1926; repr., London: Routledge, 2005). For modern studies, see Enrique García Hernán, “The Persian Gentlemen at the Spanish Court in the Early Seventeenth Century,” in *Portugal the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, ed. Rudi Matthee and Jorge Flores (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 283–300; Enrique García Hernán, “Persian Knights in Spain: Embassies and Conversion Processes,” in *The Spanish Monarchy and Safavid Persia in the Early Modern Period: Politics, War and Religion*, ed. Enrique García Hernán, Jose Cutillas Ferrer, and Rudi Matthee (Madrid: Albatros, 2016), 63–98; and Beatriz Alonso Acero, “Being So Thoroughly Spanish, the Persians: Conversion and Integration During the Monarchy of Philip III,” in Hernán, Ferrer, and Matthee, *The Spanish Monarchy*, 99–126.
17. Angelo Michele Piemontese, *Persica Vaticana. Roma e Persia tra codici e testi* (Vatican City: Vatican Library, 2017), 326–29.

18. *I'tirafnama. Ruznama-yi khatirat-i Abkar ('Ali Akbar) Armani az jadid al-Islaman-i 'ahd-i Shah Sulayman va Shah Sultan Husayn*, ed. Mansur Sifatgul (1388; Tehran: Kitabkhana, muza va markaz-i asnad-i Majlis-i Shura-yi Islami, 2009).
19. Michele Brunelli, "Sei giorni con lo Shah. Commenti sulla lettera di un viaggiatore veneziano alla corte di Abbas il Grande," *Storia Urbana* 46 (2015): 134.
20. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, 288. This refers to a provision in Shi'i law according to which, in any Christian family with one single Muslim heir the latter would inherit all of the property of his relatives. This goes back to a verse in the Qur'an (33:27), "and you inherit their lands (apostates), their homes and their property."
21. A. Hartmann, "William of Augustine and His Times," *Analecta Augustiniana* (1970): 222.
22. Monshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1181–82, who claims that all converts returned to Islam, some voluntarily, others under pressure; and Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, 259–66, which spells out the executions in great detail. More than half a century later, the memory of this case and its violent outcome was still alive. Engelbert Kaempfer, who resided in Iran in 1684–85, claimed that sixty years earlier, several Muslims who had adopted Christianity at the instigation of the Carmelites had been executed by stoning and burning respectively impalement at the orders of Shah 'Abbas. See Kaempfer, *Exotic Attractions in Persia*, 144.
23. V. A. Baiburt'ian, *Armianskaia kolonia Novoi Dzhul'fy v XVII veke* (Erevan: Akademiia Nauk Armianskoi SSR, 1969), 64.
24. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse*, ed. L. Langlès (Paris: Le Normant, 1810–11), 9: 514.
25. Chardin, *Voyages*, 6: 73–74.
26. See Rudi Matthee, "Christians in Safavid Iran," *Studies on Persianate Societies* 3 (2005): 26–27; and Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: The Decline of the Safavids and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 185–86.
27. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, 364–65; Francis Richard, *Raphaël du Mans missionnaire en Perse au XVIIe s.*, 2 vols. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), 2: 236ff.
28. Netherlands National Archives, The Hague, VOC 1215, Willemsz., Gamron to Batavia, March 30, 1657, folder 864; Richard, ed., *Raphael du Mans*, 1:143.
29. Haus-Hof und Staats Archiv (Vienna), Persien 1552–1798, Karton 1.
30. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, 411–12.
31. Tiburcio, "Convert Literature," 29.
32. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, 364.
33. Yusuf Sharifi, *Dard-i dil-i zimma. Nigarish bar zindigani-yi ijtimai'-yi aqaliyatha-yi mazhabi dar avakhir-i 'asr-i Safavi* (Los Angeles: Ketab Corp., 2009), 38–39; and Vera Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study of Babai Ibn Lutf's Chronicle (1616–1662)* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987), 94ff.
34. Chardin, *Voyages*, 3: 165–66.
35. Vazken S. Ghougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 158–59.

36. Chardin, *Voyages*, 3: 165–66; Richard, *Raphaël du Mans*, 1: 82–83; Ghougassian, *Emergence of the Armenian Diocese*, 108–09, 158–59.
37. Netherlands National Archives, VOC 1373, Van Heuvel, Gamron to Batavia, April 19, 1683, folder 883v.
38. Vera B. Moreen, “The Problems of Conversion among Iranian Jews in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Iranian Studies* 19 (1986): 216.
39. Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 58. Richard Eaton calls this the “modern Protestant model” of conversion, arguing that it cannot be applied to the growth of Islam in the Indian Subcontinent. See Richard M. Eaton, “Reconsidering ‘Conversion to Islam’ in Indian History,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 379.
40. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, 409–10.
41. Chick, ed. and trans., *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, 457.
42. Nicolas Sanson, *Estat présent du royaume de Perse* (Paris: La veuve de Jacques Langlois), 10–12.
43. Jean-Baptiste de la Maze, “Journal du voyage du Père de la Maze, de Chamakié à Ispahan, par la province du Guilan,” in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères*, ed. P. Fleureau (Toulouse: Noel-Etienne Sens, 1811), 4:74.
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60. Ahmadi, *Ru'ya va siyaset dar 'asr-i Safavi*; and Mir Muhammad Sa'id Mashizi (Bardsiri), *Tazkira-yi Safaviya-yi Kirman*, ed. Muhammad Ibrahim Bastani-Parizi (1369; Tehran: Nashr-i 'ilm, 1990), 541.
61. *I'tirafnama*, 41.
62. *I'tirafnama*, 66.
63. *I'tirafnama*, 66, 70, 75.
64. The *Paraclete*, from Greek, *Parakletos*, literally meaning comforter or counselor, appears in the Gospel of John, 14:15–27. The early church interpreted this mysterious figure as the Holy Spirit. Modern scholars have generally seen him as a substitute Jesus, the figure who took Jesus's place after the latter's ascension to the heavens. In a tradition going back to Ibn Ishaq (d. 767), the author of the earliest "biography" of the Prophet, Muslims see the reference to the Paraclete as a sign, indeed as proof, of the arrival of Mohammad, or even equate the Paraclete with the Prophet of Islam. See Sean H. Anthony, "Muhammad, Menahem, and the Paraclete: New Light on Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15:23–16:1," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79:2 (2016): 255–78.
65. The Islamic statement of faith declares the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet. Hence the twofold declaration.

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II. Conversion, Apostasy, and Relations Between Muslims and Non-Muslims

FATWAS OF THE OTTOMAN SHAYKH AL-ISLAM

NIKOLAY ANTOV

This chapter presents a selection of fatwas of Ottoman shaykh al-Islams (Tr. *şeyhülislam*) on issues related to conversion to Islam, apostasy, and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in early modern Ottoman society.

Fatwas (pl. *fatawa*; Tr. *fetva*, pl. *fetava*) constitute one of the major genres in Islamic legal literature. A fatwa represents a formal authoritative, but nonbinding, legal opinion issued by a qualified jurisconsult (*mufti*) in response to a question posed by a questioner about the norms of Islamic law (*shari'a*), whether in connection with litigation or not. Fatwas may thus be meaningfully compared to rabbinic *responsa* in Judaic law and to *responsa prudentium* in Roman law.¹

A fatwa consists of two main parts—the question (*su'al*) and the answer (*jawab*). The question contains a presentation of the case, usually rendered in as abstract a way as possible, avoiding all extraneous details, to give the fatwa the character of a decision on a general point of law.² Instead of the names of real persons, fatwas use a set of conventional names, most often Zayd, Amr, and Bakr for men, and Hind, Zaynab, and Khadija for women.³

The issuance of fatwas (*ifta*) is “the separate domain of the jurisconsult (*mufti*)” as opposed to that of the judge (*qadi*).⁴ In fatwas, the factual description of the case provided by the questioner is taken as a given, and the mufti issues an interpretive solution that engages the sources of the law. This contrasts with a judge’s central task, which is to sort out the competing factual versions put forward by the litigants in a specific court case. Thus a mufti’s “fatwas mainly provide determinations of law, assuming a set of facts,” whereas a qadi’s “judgements mainly provide determinations of fact, assuming a set of laws.”⁵

This does not mean, however, that fatwas have limited value as a historical source. They were not “the creation of jurists’ minds and fanciful imagination,” but they reflected the contemporary social realities; it is for this reason that fatwa material was regularly incorporated in works of Islamic substantive law (*furu’*) and thus very much shaped the development of Islamic legal doctrine. Because fatwas emanate from the existing social reality, they are an excellent source for social and cultural history in Islamic societies.⁶

Because of their importance for the development of substantive Islamic law, fatwas from prominent jurists associated with a particular school of legal thought (*madhhab*), in particular, have regularly been put together in collections since the second half of the tenth century and continue into the present. The compilers of such collections are usually disciples, close associates, or followers of the respective jurist(s).⁷ These collections most often contain the fatwas of a single jurist, but sometimes fatwas of several prominent jurists are compiled. Such collections are used in both the composition of manuals of substantive law and as stand-alone reference resources for jurists and laymen alike who adhere to the respective *madhhab*.

The fatwas presented here come from the collections of three very influential Ottoman muftis who occupied the pinnacle of the Ottoman learned hierarchy (Tr. *ulema*, Ar. *‘ulama’*) and came to hold the title mufti of Istanbul and its equivalent, shaykh al-Islam: Ebu’s-Su‘ud Efendi (1490–1574; in service as shaykh al-Islam, 1545–1574), Çatalcalı ‘Ali Efendi (1631–1692; in service, 1674–1686 and 1692), and Mentēşizade⁸ ‘Abdürrahim Efendi (d. 1717; in service, 1715–1716).

Fatwa issuance originated in the first decades of Islamic history. For most of the medieval period, muftis, like most of the *‘ulama’* class, were largely independent from political authority.⁹ Indeed, *ifta* could be used as an instrument of political criticism; it could also be used to legitimize government policies as rulers and governors sought fatwas from prominent jurists in support of their political decisions.¹⁰

However, in the early modern Ottoman Empire, especially from the sixteenth century onward, the *‘ulama’* became tightly integrated into the judicial and educational system under the control of the state. By Ebu’s-Su‘ud’s death (1574), the Ottoman *‘ulama’* were organized as a learned hierarchy presided over by the shaykh al-Islam, appointed by the sultan, who served as an embodiment of the shari‘a and as a religious sanction for the imperial regime.¹¹ He was followed in importance by the two military judges (*kadi‘asker*) of Anatolia and Rumelia, respectively. Below that level the hierarchy branched out into two—the judiciary, composed of judges occupying the judgeships of large and small cities in a system of graded appointments; and the educational system, comprising a similar hierarchy of Islamic colleges (Ar. *madrasas*, Tr. *medreses*) with professors holding appointments graded in terms of pay and the college’s prestige and rank in the system.¹² From the time of Ebu’s-Su‘ud onward, the path to the office of shaykh al-Islam would normally feature positions at some of the highest ranking medreses and large city judgeships (such as those of Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul), followed by holding the military judgeships of Anatolia and/or Rumelia.

Such was indeed the career path followed by all three shaykh al-Islams whose fatwas are presented in this chapter. Ebu's-Su'ud Efendi (1490–1574), by far the most influential Ottoman shaykh al-Islam, was the son of a noted scholar and Sufi. He held appointments as a professor at a number of medreses in ascending order of rank and prestige, attaining a position at the Sahn-ı Seman (the most prestigious Ottoman medrese at the time) in 1528. Between 1533 and 1537 he successively held the judgeships of Bursa and Istanbul, and in 1537 he was appointed military judge of Rumelia, a post he held until his appointment as shaykh al-Islam in 1545.¹³ Apart from making the shaykh al-Islam's office the most prestigious and highly paid in the Ottoman learned hierarchy, Ebu's-Su'ud significantly enhanced its decision-making powers, including on the issue of making appointments in the learned profession.¹⁴ He is also credited with bureaucratization of the office's fatwa issuance function, creating the Fatwa Department (*fetvahane*) headed by a supervisor (the *fetva emini*), which would enable the shaykh al-Islam to issue hundreds of fatwas a day.¹⁵ He also made formative contributions to the harmonization of Ottoman dynastic law (*kanun*) with the shari'a.¹⁶

Çatalcalı 'Ali Efendi (1631–1692) was born in Çatalca (in Thrace). He was a son of a Sufi shaykh, and he held several positions in the judiciary (including the judgeship of Salonica) as well as medrese professorships before serving as military judge of Rumelia from 1671 to 1673. In 1674, Sultan Mehmed IV appointed him shaykh al-Islam, a position he held for twelve years before being dismissed in 1686 in the midst of the Ottomans' long war with the Holy League (1683–1699). He spent several years in provincial retirement but managed to return to Istanbul and accede to the shaykh al-Islam office once again in 1692. He died only forty days later.¹⁷

Menteşizade 'Abdürrahim Efendi (d. 1716), the son of a court scribe in Bursa, had a similar career. After holding several medrese appointments, he served as judge of Yenişehir and Edirne. Following a ten-year period of retirement, he returned to active service and briefly held the judgeships of Üsküdar and Cairo, was appointed judge of Istanbul in 1705, military judge of Anatolia in 1708, and military judge of Rumelia several times between 1711 and 1715, before attaining the highest position in the learned hierarchy. Although his tenure as shaykh al-Islam lasted only seventeen months, the collection of his fatwas compiled after his death came to be seen as one of the most influential.¹⁸

CONVERSION TO ISLAM AND APOSTASY

In Islamic legal theory, the formal requirements for conversion to Islam are the same, regardless of gender, social status, or age: the standard form of the act of conversion is lifting one's right index finger and pronouncing the statement of faith (*shahada*) in the presence of two sound male Muslim witnesses.¹⁹ This is certainly confirmed in the fatwa collections presented here (see Nos. 9, 14);²⁰ however, other fatwas indicate that a variety of acts (the pronouncement of

alternative verbal formulae or nonverbal actions) would also render one's conversion licit. A non-Muslim who had declared "I became/am a Muslim" would equally be considered to have licitly converted to Islam (Nos. 2, 4, 5, 16), participation in communal religious rituals together with other Muslims such as performing the ritual prayer in a mosque (No. 8) or putting on Muslim clothes, especially headgear (No. 4), would also render one's conversion licit.²¹ Apart from situations in which conversion was a clear and conscious choice, the three collections contain numerous rulings dealing with cases in which the conscious expression of free will on the part of the convert is clearly absent or doubtful. The two most typical such situations are conversion in the state of drunkenness (Nos. 2, 9, 17) and under (physical) coercion or individual or communal pressure (Nos. 10, 15, 16). At first glance it may seem startling that fatwas would legitimize conversion under physical pressure or in the state of drunkenness, but it should be noted that the Hanafi legal tradition (the dominant one in the Ottoman domains) emphasized verbal affirmation as an element of one's faith (as in Nos. 2, 9, 16).²² However, such circumstances upon conversion could be seen as having a mitigating effect in the event of subsequent apostasy. Overall the three fatwa collections do not evince substantial differences with regard to the basic norms according to which conversion is declared valid or invalid, but the fatwas of Ebu's-Su'ud place a relative emphasis on the importance of internal conviction and the need to openly disavow one's old religion whereas the later ones of 'Ali Efendi and 'Abdürrahim Efendi tend to be more assertive in a greater variety of cases where conversion takes place as a result of nonverbal acts, under pressure, or in the state of drunkenness.

There is no substantial evidence that the Ottoman state pursued overarching policies aimed at mass conversion, but there is significant evidence that communal pressure (especially in urban contexts) played a role in the process of conversion in early modern Ottoman society. One example can be found in the remarks of the German diplomat Hans Dernschwam in the mid-sixteenth century regarding attempts made by the "Turks" to exert pressure on Christians and Jews in the community to convert, including attempts to trick non-Muslims into pronouncing the shahada.²³ The observations of another member of a German diplomatic mission—Stephan Gerlach, who visited the Ottoman domains in the 1570s—stress communal attempts to induce prospective local converts to Islam by offering them absolution of sins, splendid clothes, and opportunities for social advancement and, conversely, threatening them with torture if they declined.²⁴ Finally, the famous traveler Evliya Çelebi tells us of "the nice custom" practiced in northern Greece as of 1668 on the "days of the red eggs" (Easter), when local Muslims went out seeking Christians, whom they would force to convert to Islam; the new converts would then be paraded before the local Muslims and rewarded with presents.²⁵ In the same relation, contrary to the widespread contention that in early modern Ottoman society numerous Orthodox Christian neo-martyrs suffered their tragic deaths heroically while resisting conversion to Islam, most of them died as apostates as they, at

least according to their vitae, had been deceived or forced to accept Islam, or alternatively, were provoked to insult Islam and later offered the opportunity to convert to avoid punishment, and following that, embraced Christianity again.²⁶ Thus, according to the vita of St. Nicholas (Nikola) the New who was martyred in Sofia in 1555, he was circumcised while drunk and later, when he came back to his senses and denied his conversion, was tried as an apostate.²⁷ Nicholas the Grocer from Karpenesi, Greece, who died a martyr in 1672, was deceived into pronouncing the shahada in front of a number of local Janissaries without realizing it.²⁸

In its clear-cut, unconditional formulation, apostasy in Islam can be conceptualized as being committed verbally by denouncing one's adherence to Islam, denouncing a specific commandment, vilifying the Prophet Muhammad, or by a nonverbal action such as treating a copy of the Qur'an with disrespect.²⁹ In cases of a clear-cut, unequivocal rejection of Islam, the rules prescribed by the prevailing majority of jurists, and in the Hanafi tradition in particular, are fairly simple. The punishment for apostasy is the death penalty for men (provided they are sane), but they are normally given the chance to repent, and according to some jurists might be allowed some time (usually three days) to do so upon request. Women and discriminating minors capable to perform a valid act of apostasy are exempt from capital punishment, but they are kept imprisoned until they come back to Islam.³⁰

In Ottoman fatwas these rules seem to be strictly followed. In fact, in certain cases the answer simply stipulates that "the ordinances for apostates should be applied" (*ahkam-ı mürtedd icra olunur*) (No. 57). As for apostasy of converts who had converted under coercion or in the state of drunkenness, male apostates are spared the death penalty and are to be forced to embrace Islam again (Nos. 10, 62, 63).

Apart from fatwas dealing with clear-cut cases of apostasy, a number of rulings address situations involving Muslims' behavior that "verges on apostasy." Usually such fatwas concern behavior seen as typical of non-Muslim communities or groups considered to be "heretical," most notably the Qizilbash (Safavid followers or perceived sympathizers). The present chapter contains several fatwas that address adherence to preconversion customs by recent converts (Christians or Jews) and their continuous attempts to live together with their former coreligionists as if they had never converted to Islam. Three fatwas by 'Abdürrahim Efendi (Nos. 64, 65, 66) likely refer to participation by first-generation converts in religious and communal festivities such as Easter, wedding celebrations, and others. Such behavior is ruled unacceptable because it questions the validity and integrity of a Muslim's faith and goes against the strict separation of Muslim and non-Muslim communities (except in certain shared public spaces—most notably the marketplace) and the expectation that the convert join the local Muslim community. In such cases, Ottoman shaykh al-Islams usually prescribe discretionary punishment (*ta'zir*) or heavy discretionary punishment (*ta'zir-i şedid*), which usually consists of a number of lashes,³¹ as well as the renewal of faith and marriage (if the latter is

applicable).³² Such fatwas, which are more numerous in fatwa collections of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, may also reflect the persistence and growth of Crypto-Christianity as a sociocultural phenomenon, especially in the Ottoman Balkans.³³

RELATIONS BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS

A sizable number of the fatwas in the chapter address various aspects of the relations between Muslim and non-Muslim (dhimmi) communities in early modern Ottoman society along the lines of separation and coexistence. The most graphic aspect of these interactions is the issue of “interconfessional defamation”; that is, when a member of one religious community slanders a member of another community along the lines of religious affiliation or his or her religion in general. Fatwas that condemn non-Muslims who malign Muslims or Islam appear self-explanatory (Nos. 38, 39), but a fatwa by Ebu’s-Su’ud Efendi declares such behavior unacceptable even if it goes in the opposite direction (No. 29). Another ruling by the same shaykh al-Islam is careful to distinguish between slander along religious lines and the communal quibbles of everyday life (No. 20).

The assumption that Muslims and dhimmis should live separately is addressed in a number of rulings (Nos. 24, 49, 50, 51) and is generally confirmed with regard to the permanent residence of Muslims and non-Muslims in separate confessionally defined neighborhoods, but not in the case of shared public spaces, such as the marketplace (No. 51) or the temporary residence of non-Muslims in a Muslim neighborhood, especially when this does not lead to the reduction of (and thus does no harm to) the local Muslim community (No. 50). The frequent occurrence of such fatwas suggests that the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims (including in residential quarters) was far more frequent and persistent than was prescribed.³⁴

Some more specific aspects of the coexistence between Muslims and dhimmis, as reflected in shaykh al-Islams’ fatwas, include the affirmation of dhimmis’ inferior status and especially the need for them to be “humbled” in their interactions with Muslims. Non-Muslims were not supposed to openly demonstrate their “infidelity” in the presence of Muslims, for example, by participating in non-Muslim religious festivities and processions, creating “strange [or great] noise” by beating church bells or wooden planks in lieu thereof (Nos. 25, 26, 27, 52), or engaging in the production, sale, and consumption of wine (Nos. 22, 48). Similarly, in accordance with the tenets of classical Islamic legal theory, dhimmis were not allowed to build new non-Muslim sites of worship once a certain territory was incorporated in the Abode of Islam, but could only repair existing ones to bring them to their original state (Nos. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 44, 45).³⁵ However, some rulings clearly suggest that these rules applied only when Muslims and non-Muslims lived together (in mixed settlements). Dhimmis living in isolated communities far away from

the gaze of Muslims could freely adhere to their traditions without interference, including the production and sale of wine or the construction of new churches (Nos. 47, 43).

LANGUAGE

Finally, the selection of fatwas presented here offers several rulings specifically dealing with language. Intriguingly, such a concept does not exist in classical Islamic legal theory; however, these rulings speak of “the language of the infidels” and prescribe the avoidance of speaking of such language(s)—the implication being that these are spoken mostly by non-Muslims (and thus identified as “infidel languages”). This may be explained in two ways: first, along the lines of the prescribed separation between Muslims and non-Muslims, to the extent possible, in everyday life interactions (Nos. 67, 68, 69); and second, in tune with the already discussed concerns about adherence to preconversion customs and practices conceptualized as behavior that may compromise the integrity and validity of Muslims’ (and especially recent converts’) faith (No. 70).³⁶

TRANSLATIONS

Conversion to Islam

EBU’S-SU’UD EFENDI

(1) *Question*: If the Jew Zeyd puts on a white turban at a dangerous place,³⁷ may he be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: No.

(2) *Question*: If the dhimmi Zeyd, having drunk wine and being out of his senses, says: “There is no God, but God, and Muhammad is His messenger,”³⁸ and [also] says: “I became a Muslim,” may he be considered to have licitly become a Muslim?

Answer: Yes, with the [affirmative] opinion of a judge. If he has said [in addition] “I turned away from infidelity,” then he has become a Muslim without doubt.

(3) *Question*: If the dhimmi Zeyd pronounces the statement of faith [the shahada], but does not do so persuasively, may he be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: No.

(4) *Question*: If an unbeliever has changed his clothes,³⁹ and being asked: “Are you a Muslim or an unbeliever?” says, out of fear: “I am a Muslim,” what should be done to that unbeliever?

Answer: He becomes a Muslim [that is, he should be considered a Muslim].

'ALI EFENDI

(5) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd says: "I became a Muslim," may he be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: Yes.

(6) *Question:* If the Christian Zeyd makes a promise, saying: "I will become a Muslim," can he, on the sole basis of this, be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: No.

(7) *Question:* If the Christian woman Hind, wife of the Christian Zeyd, is honored by the glory of Islam [that is, converts to Islam] and thereafter Zeyd is offered to do the same, but declines, should Hind be separated from Zeyd?

Answer: Yes.

(8) *Question:* If the infidels Zeyd, Amr, and Bekr go to the sacred mosque at night time and, emulating [the bodily movements of] the imam Bîşr, perform the night prayer together with the congregation of Muslims [that is, the other Muslims there], may they be considered to have [licitly] become Muslims?

Answer: Yes.

(9) *Question:* If the Christian Zeyd, who denies [that is, is generally known to deny] the prophethood of the most noble Prophet, peace be upon him, pronounces, being out of his senses and while in the state of drunkenness: "There is no God, but God, and Muhammad is His messenger" [the shahada], but does not do so persuasively, may he be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: Yes.

(10) *Question:* If several people [Muslims] force the dhimmi Zeyd [into accepting Islam] by saying: "Come to Islam!" and Zeyd accepts Islam against his will, may Zeyd be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: Yes, but if he goes back [to infidelity] he should not be killed, but should be forced [back] to Islam.

(11) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd's three-year old son Amr, who has no ability to reason, says: "I became a Muslim," may Amr be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: No.

(12) *Question:* The dhimmi woman Hind, wife of the dhimmi Zeyd, is honored by the glory of Islam. May Amr, Hind's little [underaged] son by Zeyd, be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim as a dependent of Hind?

Answer: Yes.

(13) *Question:* The dhimmi Zeyd is honored by the glory of Islam. May he [thereafter] force his grown-up [adult] son, the dhimmi Amr [to convert to Islam], by saying: "You too, come to Islam!"

Answer: No.

‘ABDÜRRAHİM EFENDİ

(14) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd, while conversing with several Muslims, says: “There is no God, but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger,” may Zeyd be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: Yes.

(15) *Question:* If the representative of the authorities Zeyd presses the dhimmi Amr [to accept Islam], saying: “Become a Muslim!,” and Amr [thus] becomes a Muslim by force, may Amr be considered a sound Muslim [is his conversion licit]?

Answer: Yes.

(16) *Question:* If a representative of the authorities ties the infidel Zeyd with a rope around his neck and starts strangling him, and Zeyd says “Let me go! I became a Muslim,” may Zeyd be considered to have [licitly] become a Muslim?

Answer: Yes.

(17) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd, being out of his senses as a result of wine consumption, becomes a Muslim, may Zeyd be considered a sound Muslim [that is, is his conversion licit]?

Answer: Yes.

(18) *Question:* The dhimmi Zeyd has been honored to accept Islam. Have his minor children become Muslims, being dependants of their father?

Answer: Yes.

Relations Between Muslims and Non-Muslims

EBU’S-SU‘UD EFENDİ

(19) *Question:* [The Muslim] Zeyd is sitting in front of a shop together with several dhimmis, having a friendly conversation with them. If Amr [supposedly another Muslim who happens to be passing by] says to Zeyd: “You are an infidel!,” what is lawfully due to Amr?

Answer: If Amr said that having witnessed Zeyd’s inclination toward and affection for the dhimmis, then nothing is to be done to Amr.

(20) *Question:* If the Janissary Zeyd says to the Muslim Amr: “The dhimmi Bekr is better [that is, worthier] than you!,” what is lawfully due to Zeyd?

Answer: If he means: “His [Bekr’s] infidelity is better than your [Amr’s] “Muslimness,” he becomes an infidel; if he means: “He [Bekr] is a better neighbor than you [Amr],” then, if that is true, nothing is to be done [to Zeyd].

(21) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd treats the Muslim Amr with red eggs and pastry on the holiday of the infidels,⁴⁰ and Amr accepts these, is anything to be done to Amr according to the law?

Answer: There is no harm in this, if he does not do it in reverence for that (holi) day, but rather out of respect for his neighbor.

(22) *Question*: If the dhimmi woman Hind—the wife of the Muslim Zeyd—sells wine in their house, what is to be done to the mentioned Hind?

Answer: She should be subjected to discretionary punishment as she [thus] dishonors a Muslim.

(23) *Question*: In the event that the Muslim husband of the dhimmi woman Hind dies, should Hind take her dowry,⁴¹ and if not, is she entitled to anything by way of inheritance?

Answer: She should take her dowry immediately.

(24) *Question*: A small mosque (*mescid*)⁴² has found itself surrounded by [the houses of] infidels, and there are no Muslim houses around. If an imam and a *müezzin* [and by implication, other Muslims] go to the mosque merely to perform their duties and pray, is their performance of these duties canonically lawful (*helal*)?

Answer: The Muslims [in the vicinity] should set about to forcibly buy out the houses [from the infidels] without delay.

(25) *Question*: A church is situated in a neighborhood populated by Muslims. The infidels use a thin wooden plank, which they have pierced at different places, at the time of their religious services by beating it in lieu of a church bell, thus creating a strange [or “great”] noise. If the Muslims are vexed by this, is it unobjectionable (*ca’iz*) to make the infidels discontinue [this practice of theirs]?

Answer: It is obligatory (*vacib*).⁴³

(26) *Question*: In an infidel village there are two Muslims. The infidels beat a wooden plank [in lieu of a church bell] in their churches.⁴⁴ Can the said [Muslims] prohibit this practice [of the infidels]?

Answer: They can, with the [affirmative] opinion of a judge, provided that they are upright [Muslims].

(27) *Question*: The Christian community in a town gathers together for three days in the year for amusements and entertainments in accordance with their ancient customs. While they do not do harm to anybody and never show any aggression to the Muslims, can the [town’s] Jewish community, in consequence of their enmities with the mentioned [Christians], prohibit [these Christian festivities]?

Answer: The people of Islam [that is, the Muslims in town] should prohibit [this]. To say: “There is no harm to anybody [in doing this]” is patently false, it is irreligious. In a town in which the Friday noon service is performed⁴⁵ the [open] demonstration of [such] signs of infidelity does harm to the faith. It is not unobjectionable (*ca’iz*) for either those accursed ones [the Christians] nor for the accursed Jews to ever behave like this. [The local judge] should disperse their gatherings by beating them. If he shows neglect [in this matter] his dismissal is due.

(28) *Question*: [Some] dhimmis have revolted against the Padishah of Islam and have been attacked [by imperial troops or other Muslim armed men] in accordance with an [imperial] order. Is it unobjectionable (*ca’iz*) to treat these dhimmis as other *harbis*?⁴⁶ that is, to take them captives and sell them?

Answer: If they have revolted, the compact of protection (Tr. *zimmet*, Ar. *dhimma*) must be abrogated. If they [just] do not pay their *harac*, or engage in robbery and theft, or do not obey the orders of the provincial governor, having fled to the mountains to escape from the governor's oppression, their protection is not to be abrogated. [Only] if they have joined the Abode of War or if they have attacked/invaded a certain place [should they be treated like *harbis*]; as long as they do not fight against us, they cannot be taken captives.

(29) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd curses⁴⁷ the religion and faith of the dhimmi Amr, what is lawfully due to Zeyd?

Answer: That who curses a divinely revealed religion is an infidel.

Another answer: That who is approving of the cursing of religion and faith is also an infidel.

(30) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd, while being married, commits adultery with the dhimmi maiden Hind, what is to be done?

Answer: The accursed ones are not subject to stoning,⁴⁸ but having perpetrated the *hadd*⁴⁹ of adultery, a long imprisonment in the most abominable prison quarters is due.

(31) *Question:* What is lawfully due to the dhimmi Amr if he commits adultery with the Muslim woman Hind, the wife of the Muslim Zeyd?

Answer: If he converts to Islam, he is saved from execution. Hind is subject to stoning if she did it willingly.⁵⁰

(32) *Question:* The Muslims took possession of a church upon the conquest [of the place]. Can the Christians restore their possession of the church by buying it [back from the Muslims]?

Answer: They cannot, it is not possible.

(33) *Question:* At the time a [Christian] fortress was conquered by the Padishah of Islam there was no church in its suburbium (*varos*). If after the conquest the infidels come and settle there and erect a church, saying "Previously we had a church here," can the Muslims lawfully pull it down?"

Answer: Yes, if the Friday noon service is performed in the fortress.

(34) *Question:* Muslims and dhimmis live together in a mixed village. Can the [local] judge of the canon law of Islam have the church built by the dhimmis demolished?

Answer: Yes, if there is a small mosque [in the village].

(35) *Question:* If the infidels within a city had their churches from the days of yore, and now the top [portion of their churches] is in ruins, can the churches be repaired?

Answer: Yes.

(36) *Question:* As the courtyard of a church in a town is [too] small, may the [local] infidels acquire some [additional] land and enlarge the courtyard?

Answer: Heretofore they have been content with this [situation], henceforth they should be content with it hereafter [too].

'ALI EFENDI

(37) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd, husband of the Christian woman Hind, dies, may Hind marry the dhimmi man Amr, provided that the mandatory waiting period [following the death of a husband] has expired?

Answer: Yes.

(38) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd urinates against the wall of a mosque, what is to be done to Zeyd?

Answer: He should be subjected to a heavy discretionary punishment and prevented and restrained [from doing so].

(39) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd tells several Muslims: "Damn you and damn your religion!" what should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: Heavy discretionary punishment.

(40) *Question:* The dhimmi Zeyd has been taken captive by *harbis*. After Zeyd had been brought to the Abode of War [as a captive] several Muslims took him from the *harbis* by force and brought him [back] to the Abode of Islam. Can the mentioned [Muslims] enslave Zeyd, saying: "We took away [the infidel] Zeyd from the Abode of War"?

Answer: No.⁵¹

(41) *Question:* The *harbi* Zeyd accepted Islam in the Abode of War, but it has not been in his powers to relocate to the Abode of Islam. If, while residing in his village in the Abode of War, a group of Muslims raid that [Zeyd's] village and capture Zeyd's minor son Amr and bring Amr to the Abode of Islam, can the said Muslims enslave Amr if it has been legally established that Zeyd accepted Islam prior to Amr's capture?

Answer: No.⁵²

(42) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd goes to another country and disappears, can the *jizya*⁵³ collector Amr demand from Bekr—Zeyd's father—to pay Zeyd's *jizya* on the sole basis of being Zeyd's father.

Answer: No.

(43) *Question:* The population of a village consists entirely of dhimmis, it is far away from Muslim cities [or areas populated by Muslims] and there are no Muslims [residing] in its vicinity. If the people of the said village want to erect a church, should they be banned [from doing so]?

Answer: No.

(44) *Question:* A city [or town] has both Muslim and infidel residents. If the infidels erect a church within the city, can the [local] judge have the mentioned church demolished?

Answer: Yes.

(45) *Question:* The rooms of an ancient monastery located in a [city] neighborhood are in need of repair. If the monks of that monastery repair the rooms, restoring them to their original condition without adding anything [to the monastery

structure], can the representative of the authorities Zeyd, just because [the said] repairs were made, say: “I will demolish the rooms”?

Answer: No, he cannot.

(46) *Question:* All the residents of a large [originally] infidel village gradually accepted Islam. Having been abandoned, the old village church fell in ruins. If the population of the said village demand to bulild a mosque in the place of the said church, with the aforementioned village being considered a city [having fulfilled the requirements for attaining urban status] and the Friday prayer to become licit, and having obtained a sultanic permission so that the Friday noon service could be properly performed, would the performance of the Friday [noon] prayer in the mosque built in the place of the said church be lawfully permissible (*ca'iz*)?

Answer: Yes.

(47) *Question:* A village whose population consists entirely of dhimmis is [also] far away from any city [which has a Muslim community]. If the village residents produce wine from the grapes in their vineyards and sell it to one another, can they be interfered with?

Answer: No.

(48) *Question:* The dhimmis of a town that has Muslim residents manifestly [that is, without making an effort to conceal it] sell wine to each other. Should they be banned from manifesting this activity of theirs?

Answer: Yes.

(49) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd purchases a house in the Muslim neighborhood of a town, can the [local] judge force Zeyd to sell the house to a Muslim?

Answer: Yes.

(50) *Question:* Zeyd, the superintendant of a *waqf* (a pious endowment) in a town rents some rooms belonging to the *waqf* and abutting the sacred walls of a mosque to infidels. This [however] has not resulted in a reduction of the [local Muslim] community.⁵⁴ If some Muslims [come and] say to Zeyd: “We are not happy that the rooms are rented to infidels,” can they make Zeyd expel the infidels [from the rented rooms]?

Answer: No.

(51) *Question:* The dhimmi Zeyd has a shop at a marketplace. Behind his shop there are several Muslim houses. Can those Muslims [residing in those houses] [come and] say to Zeyd: “We do not want a dhimmi shop close to our houses. Sell your shop to us!” and thus force Zeyd to do so?

Answer: No.

‘ABDÜRRAHIM EFENDI

(52) *Question:* In a large village Muslims and infidels live together. The Friday prayer is performed in the congregational mosque, there are [also] several small mosques (*mescids*), dervish convents (*tekyes*), and schools (*mektebs*), the signs of Islam are visible. The village infidels beat the bell in their churches that have

remained from ancient times. They also keep swine, and adorn their children and walk them [thus adorned] in the streets during their infidel holidays. If they [thus openly] demonstrate their infidelity, can the [local] judge ban them from doing that?

Answer: Yes.

In this case, if the mentioned infidels say: “We pay the *cizye* and *ispençe*⁵⁵ and [for this reason] one cannot prevent us from demonstrating our infidelity [that is, from openly adhering to one’s non-Muslim customs], and if, after having been warned [not to do so], they persist [in their behavior], what should be done according to the law to the mentioned [infidels]?”

Answer: They should be prohibited from doing so and subjected to heavy discretionary punishment.

Apostasy and Behavior Verging on Apostasy

EBU’S-SU’UD EFENDI

(53) *Question:* What is lawfully due to Zeyd who, after having become Muslim, has become infidel again?

Answer: He should be forced [back] to Islam, if he does not come [back to Islam], he is to be killed.

(54) *Question:* The dhimmi woman Hind converted to Islam and then apostatized. Should she be killed if she persists in her apostasy?

Answer: No, but she should never be let out of prison and should not see the light of day till she dies.

(55) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd brings his little son to church and has him baptized, what is to be done [to Zeyd] according to the law?

Answer: He should become a Muslim again.⁵⁶

‘ALI EFENDI

(56) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd, dishonoring himself, puts an infidel hat on his head, what should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: Renewal of faith and marriage.

(57) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd, after having been honored by the glory of Islam, may his refuge be in God, becomes an apostate, what should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: The ordinances for apostates should be applied.

(58) *Question:* If the Christian woman Hind, after having been honored by the glory of Islam, becomes an apostate, may her refuge be in God, what should be done to Hind?

Answer: She should be imprisoned until she comes [back] to Islam.

(59) *Question:* The Christian woman Hind accepted Islam and, following that, married the Muslim Zeyd. Thereafter, Zeyd went to war and Hind became an apostate and married the dhimmi Amr. What should be done to Hind?

Answer: She should be separated from Amr, subjected to a heavy discretionary punishment, and imprisoned until she comes [back] to Islam.

(60) *Question:* The dhimmi Zeyd was honored by the glory of Islam and his minor son Amr became a Muslim, being Zeyd's dependant. If, after he became of age, Amr did not confirm [his conversion to] Islam and [thus] became an apostate, what should be done to him?

Answer: He should be imprisoned until he comes [back] to Islam.

‘ABDÜRRAHİM EFENDİ

(61) *Question:* The Christian woman Hind was honored by the glory of Islam. If thereafter, may God protect her, she becomes an apostate, what is to be done to her?

Answer: She must be imprisoned and forced [back] to Islam.

(62) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd accepted Islam by force, and becomes an apostate thereafter, what should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: He should be imprisoned and forced [back] to Islam.

(63) *Question:* If the dhimmi Zeyd, while in a state of drunkenness and being out of his senses, pronounces the statement of faith [the shahada], and moreover, does it persuasively, but becomes an apostate thereafter, what should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: He should be imprisoned until he comes [back] to Islam.

(64) *Question:* On Easter (Paskaliya) the Muslim Zeyd brings his wife—the Muslim Hind—to the houses of some of his infidel relatives. There he gives himself up to debauchery, drinks wine, and having seated Hind together with him, sings songs to her and tells her: “Here, drink!,” thus forcing her to drink wine [as well]. What should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: He should be subjected to the punishment for wine-drinking as well as to heavy discretionary punishment. If he has behaved like that thinking that it was permissible, his faith and marriage should be renewed.

(65) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd goes to a wedding of infidels, jumps up and starts dancing “horos”⁵⁷ with them, thus showing a predilection for the infidel customs, what should be done to Zeyd?

Answer: He should be subjected to heavy discretionary punishment and his faith and marriage should be renewed.

(66) *Question:* A few Muslims participated in the infidels' dances. Zeyd solicited a fatwa from the shaykh al-Islam regarding their behavior and received an answer: “Renewal of faith and marriage.” Thereafter Zeyd showed the lawful fatwa to these people and told them: “If you continue to do this you will need to have your faith and marriage renewed.” In case that these people respond: “Do not talk nonsense! We have seen these customs from our forefathers and will continue to adhere to them,”⁵⁸ what should be done to those people according to the law?

Answer: It is lawful that they be killed.

Language

EBU'S-SU'UD EFENDI

(67) *Question:* The Padishah—Refuge of the World—has conquered a certain land. [Subsequently] some Muslims settled there. If they speak in the language of that land,⁵⁹ is anything to be done to them according to the law?

Answer: If they have compelling reasons, being unable to communicate [in any other way] religious matters to the Muslims [native to that land], they have permission to communicate important matters [in the local language].

(68) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd speaks in an infidel language for no compelling reason, does this harm his marriage according to the law?

Answer: It is nothing but harm. There should be no judgment about his unbelief and he should not be separated from his wife. He should be subjected to a heavy discretionary punishment and prevented and restrained [from speaking in the foreign language].

‘ABDÜRRAHİM EFENDİ

(69) *Question:* If the Muslim Zeyd speaks in the language of the infidels for no compelling reason, what is to be done to Zeyd?

Answer: Discretionary punishment.

(70) *Question:* Zeyd is the müfti in a small town. If he speaks, for no compelling reason, in the language of the infidels with (some) local Muslims at a gathering, what is lawfully due to Zeyd and the said Muslims?

Answer: They should be subjected to a discretionary punishment and should be prevented and restrained [from speaking in the language of the infidels].

In this case: If Bekr—the judge of that [same] small town—asks Zeyd and the said Muslims: “Why do you speak in the language of the infidels? This is wrong!” and they reply: “This is the language of our forefathers. It is canonically lawful (*helal*),” what is lawfully due to Zeyd and those others?

Answer: They should be subjected to a discretionary punishment, they should ask for God’s forgiveness, and their language should be cleansed.

REFERENCES TO TRANSLATED FATWAS

Ebu's-z Efendi

From M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyülislâm Ebussuûd Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983). Fatwa number in the present collection is followed by the fatwa number in Düzdağ’s edition.

No: 1–358; 2–360; 3–361; 4–362; 19–383; 20–384; 21–391; 22–396; 23–397; 24–405; 25–406; 26–407; 27–410; 28–439; 29–442; 30–447; 31–449; 32–457; 33–459; 34–460; 35–465; 36–466; 53–370; 54–371; 55–387; 67–527; 68–528.

‘Ali Efendi

From: ‘Ali Efendi Çatalcalı, *Fetava-yı ‘Ali Efendi* (Istanbul: Sahafiye-yi Osmaniye Şirketi, 1311 AH/1894 CE), 2 vols.; the following references pertain to vol. 1.

No: 5—p. 177, No. 3; 6—p. 177, No. 4; 7—p. 32, No. 6; 8—p. 176, No. 4; 9—p. 177, No. 1; 10—p. 177, No. 2; 11—p. 178, No. 3, 12—p. 178, No. 5, 13—p. 178, No. 6; 37—p. 32, No. 7; 38—p. 151, No. 7; 39—p. 151, No. 8; 40—p. 165, No. 3; 41—p. 165, No. 1; 42—p. 170, No. 1; 43—p. 171, No. 1; 44—p. 171, No. 2; 45—p. 171, No. 5; 46—p. 172, No. 1; 47—p. 172, No. 4; 48—p. 172, No. 5; 49—p. 173, No. 3; 50—p. 174, No. 1; 51—p. 174, No. 2; 56—p. 181, No. 4; 57—p. 185, No. 3; 58—p. 185, No. 4; 59—p. 185, No. 5; 60—p. 186, No. 2.

‘Abdürrahim Efendi

From Menteşizade ‘Abdürrahim, *Fetava-yı ‘Abdürrahim* (Kostantiniye: Darü’t-Tıba‘atü’l-Ma‘muretü’s-Sultaniye, 1243 AH/1827 CE), 2 vols.; the following references pertain to vol. 1.

No: 14—p. 72, No. 7; 15—p. 72, No. 8; 16—p. 73, No. 4; 17—p. 72, No. 10; 18—p. 71, No. 7; 52—p. 79, No. 8; 61—p. 71, No. 9; 62—p. 71, No. 12; 63—p. 72, No. 1; 64—p. 89, No. 8; 65—p. 97, No. 1; 66—p. 97, No. 4; 69—p. 116, No. 1; 70—p. 116, No. 2.

The following fatwas by ‘Ali Efendi and ‘Abdürrahim Efendi have been published in Bulgarian translation in *Osmanski Izvori za Islamiizatsionnitate Protsesta na Balkanite* (16–19 v.). *Seriia Izvori*—2, ed. M. Kalitsin, A. Velkov, and Evg. Radushev (Sofia: BAN, 1990). Fatwa numbers are followed by the corresponding page number in the Bulgarian publication.

No. 5—p. 300; No. 7—p. 299; Nos. 8, 9, 10, & 12—p. 300; Nos. 14–17—p. 295; No. 18—p. 294; No. 46—p. 306; Nos. 57–58—p. 301; No. 59—p. 299; Nos. 61–63—p. 294; Nos. 64–66—p. 296; Nos. 69–70—p. 297.

NOTES

1. Hilmar Krüger, *Fetwa und Siyar: Zur internationalrechtlichen Gutachtenpraxis der osmanischen Şeyh ül-Islâm vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des “Behcet ül-Fetâvâ”* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1978), 66–68.
2. Uriel Heyd, “Some Aspects of the Ottoman Fatwa,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 32 (1969): 41; Colin Imber, *Ebu’s-Su’ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 56.

3. In Turkish these names appear orthographically as Zeyd, Amr, Bekr, Hind (Hint), Zeyneb (Zeynep), and Hatice, respectively.
4. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick, and David S. Powers, "Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation," in *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*, ed. M. K. Masud, B. Messick, and D. S. Powers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3. On the nature and definition of fatwas, see also Émile Tyan, "Fatwa (i)," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., ed. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, and J. Shacht (Leiden: Brill).
5. Masud et al., "Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation," 18.
6. Wael Hallaq, "From Fatwās to Furū': Growth and Change in Islamic Substantive Law," *Islamic Law and Society* 1, no. 1 (1994): 33, and more broadly, 31–38. Hallaq points out that fatwas reflect particular social realities, were often destined for the courtroom as they were solicited by litigants as well as judges, and the very fact that they were regularly incorporated in works of substantive law could be adduced as a proof that they reflected social reality and did not constitute speculative interpretations of a hypothetical nature.
7. Masud et al., "Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation," 9–10.
8. Variations include "Menteşzade" and "Menteşezade."
9. However, judges, for example, were more tightly integrated into governmental structures as early as from the Umayyad period (661–750) onward.
10. Masud et al., "Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation," 9.
11. Richard Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986), 300; the Ottoman office of shaykh al-Islam had its origins in the first half of the fifteenth century. Repp's monograph still remains the most authoritative work on the issue.
12. On the structure of the Ottoman learned hierarchy in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, see Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*, 27–72; for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Madeline Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988). Repp identifies a third group that could be associated with the learned hierarchy—beyond judges (*kadıs*) and *medrese* professors (*müderreses*)—that of the provincial müftis. Müftis in cities and larger towns usually held that office jointly with a *müderres* office (the latter being considered their primary occupation), but müftis in small towns and villages were most probably not well integrated in the learned hierarchy and did not hold official appointments. See Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*, 62–68.
13. The definitive study on Ebu's-Su'ud's life, work, and legacy is Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud*. See also Joseph Schacht, "Abu'l-Su'ūd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, and J. Shacht (Leiden: Brill).
14. Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul*, 278–96.
15. Heyd, "Some Aspects," 46–49.
16. On this issue, see Halil İnalcık, "Islamization of Ottoman Laws on Land and Land Tax," in *Festgabe an Josef Matuz: Osmanistik, Turkologie, Diplomatiek*, ed. Christa Fragner and Klaus Schwartz (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1992), 101–16.

17. On Çatalcalı 'Alî's life and career, see Krüger, *Fetwa und Siyar*, 72–74; Mehmet Ipşirli, "Çatalcalı Ali Efendi," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 8:234–35; and Abdülkadir Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislâmları* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1972), 94–95.
18. On 'Abdürrahim Efendi's life and career, see Krüger, *Fetwa und Siyar*, 76; Mehmet Ipşirli, "Abdürrahim Efendi, Menteşzade," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 1:289–90; and Altunsu, *Osmanlı Şeyhülislâmları* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1972), 115.
19. Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 22.
20. The author of the present chapter has given preference to fatwas dealing with circumstances and actions beyond those usually associated with the "classic" act of conversion.
21. However, in fatwa No. 4, the convert is also presented as having pronounced a verbal formula.
22. In Islamic law faith (*iman*) has three elements: internal conviction (*i'tiqad bi'l qalb*), verbal confirmation (*qawl*, or *iqrar bi'l-lisan*), and the performance of works (*'amal*), Louis Gardet, "Iman," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, and J. Shacht (Leiden: Brill). While Gardet stresses the overall importance of verbal affirmation in the Hanafi tradition, Schacht draws attention to its significance in the specific Ottoman context as his analysis is based on the most influential sixteenth-century Ottoman presentation of Islamic law—Ibrahim al-Halabi's *Multaqa al-Abhur*. Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 116–17.
23. Franz Babinger, *Hans Dernschwam's Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553/5)* (Munich: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1923), 73.
24. Stefan Gerlach, *Dnevnik na Edno Pâtuvane do Osmanskata Porta v Tsarigrad*, ed. and trans., Mariia Kiselincheva (Sofia, Bulgaria: Izdatelstvo na Otechestveniiia Front, 1976), 35–36, 74–76, 111–13.
25. Çelebi, Evliya. *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, Robert Dankoff, Zekeriyya Kurşun, and Ibrahim Sezgin (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2011), 8:82–83.
26. See Nomikos Vaporis, *Witnesses for Christ: Orthodox Christian Neomartyrs of the Ottoman Period (1437–1860)* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2000) as well as the analysis by Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 143–64.
27. Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 146.
28. Vaporis, *Witnesses for Christ*, 123–24.
29. Willi Heffening, "Murtadd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, and J. Shacht (Leiden: Brill). For a more detailed discussion of apostasy in the works of the most important classical jurists, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 121–59, esp. 121–39.
30. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, 121–29; Heffening, "Murtadd"; Rudolph Peters and Gert de Vries, "Apostasy in Islam," *Die Welt des Islams* 17 (1976–1977): 6.
31. The number of lashes varies. For example, in a ruling of his own, 'Abdürrahim Efendi sets *ta'zir-i şedid* at thirty-nine lashes, but cites other Hanafi authorities that give

- preference to seventy-five and seventy-nine, respectively; the jurist leaves the determining of the actual number to the discretion of the judge; *Fetava-yı 'Abdürrahim*, 105 (fatwa No. 1).
32. The very harsh punishment prescribed in fatwa No. 66 may be explained not by the insistence on practicing one's pre-conversion customs but rather by the refusal to follow the ruling of a shaykh al-Islam.
 33. On Crypto-Christianity and Crypto-Judaism, see Stavro Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area Under the Ottomans," *Slavic Review* 26, no. 2 (1967): 227–46; and Maurus Reinkowski, "Hidden Believers, Hidden Apostates: The Phenomenon of Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Christians in the Middle East," in *Converting Cultures: Religion, Ideology, and Transformations of Modernity*, ed. Dennis Washburn and A. Kevin Reinhart (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 409–33.
 34. Actual evidence for this may be found in Islamic court registers. For example, court registers from Sofia pertaining to the early seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (1617–1619; 1709–1729) contain the registrations of dozens of residential real estate sale transactions between Muslims (including converts) and non-Muslims (Christians and Jews), *Turski Izvori za Bălgarskata Istoriia = Fontes Turcici Historiae Bulgaricae*, vol. 6, ed. Nicolai Todorov and Maria Kalicin (Sofia, Bulgaria: BAN, 1977), 227–40. For example, in 1618 the Muslim Hüseyin sold his house to the Christian *boza*-maker Stanislav—Stanislav's new house neighbored the houses of the Muslim craftsmen Süleyman and Hüseyin and the Christian ones Velcho and Obreten, p. 248.
 35. See Rossitsa Gradeva, "Ottoman Policy Towards Christian Church Buildings," *Etudes Balkaniques* 4 (1994): 14–36.
 36. In fact, fatwa No. 70 by 'Abdürrahim Efendi is found in a chapter containing a number of similar rulings that deal with interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, but also between "true" Muslims (read Ottoman "Sunni" Muslims) and perceived Muslim "heretics" (for example, the Qizilbash). In 'Abdürrahim Efendi's fatwa collection, these rulings are included in a chapter devoted to, among other things, "speaking in the language of the infidels." See *Fetava-yı 'Abdürrahim*, 115–16.
 37. With the intention of enhancing his security by putting on the appearance of a Muslim.
 38. This is known as the "statement of faith" or "testimony of faith" in Islam.
 39. That is, has put on Muslim clothes.
 40. The holiday envisaged is obviously Easter.
 41. What is meant here is *mehr-i mü'eccel*—the (part of the) dowry paid by the husband in case of divorce or widowhood.
 42. In the Ottoman context *mescid* (Ar. *masjid*) usually denotes a small (noncongregational) mosque, as compared to *cami* (Ar. *jami'*)—a congregational mosque, more typical in urban contexts, in which the Friday noon service is properly performed.
 43. Islamic law employs graded scales to classify human actions—both with respect to the religious sanction attributed to them and to their legal validity. Thus, from the point of view of religious sanction, actions could be categorized as *wajib* (Tr. *vacib*)—obligatory; *mustahabb* (Tr. *müstehab*)—commendable, desirable; *mubah*—indifferent; *makruh* (Tr. *mekruh*)—reprehensible, but permissible; or *haram*—forbidden. The first four

categories together are classified as *halal* (Tr. *helal*)—not forbidden/canonically lawful. The use of *ja'iz* (Tr. *ca'iz*) here conveys a meaning close to *halal*, and the jurist makes the point that the suggested action is not just permissible but obligatory. For a more detailed discussion on these scales of classification of actions, see Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 120–23.

44. This situation—an almost entirely Christian village that had also become a home to a couple of Muslims (or Muslim families)—was quite typical in various parts of the Ottoman Balkans (and, to a much lesser extent, in Anatolia) in Ebu's-Su'ud's age. Usually the Muslims in such a village would be recent local converts to Islam (native to the same village) and could thus find their position within the village community precarious, sometimes verging on total isolation. This fatwa thus addresses an important aspect of the coexistence of Christians and recent converts to Islam in a rural setting. The ruling essentially aims at alleviating the discomfort such recent village converts to Islam could experience in a predominantly Christian milieu. Obviously, it also affirms such (usually recently converted) Muslims' superior social standing, thus implicitly expressing sanction and support for the act of their conversion itself.
45. That is, in a settlement that possesses a congregational mosque.
46. From the perspective of classical Islamic legal theory, the world is divided into two parts: the Abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*), which comprises all territories controlled by Islamic states and thus governed according to the principles of Islamic political theory; and the Abode of War (*dar al-harb*)—the rest of the world. Thus, *harbi* is the legal designation of an infidel from the Abode of War, who is considered an enemy and is not entitled to any protection from an Islamic state. It should be distinguished from *dhimmi*—the legal designation for a non-Muslim permanently living in the Abode of Islam and a subject of a Muslim sovereign, whereby a *dhimmi* enjoys the protection of the Muslim state in which he or she resides. Another legal category of non-Muslims is that of *musta'min* (Tr. *müste'min*)—a non-Muslim from the Abode of War (and thus a subject of a non-Muslim sovereign) who enjoys temporary protection/safe-conduct while residing in the Abode of Islam (for example, a foreign, non-Muslim merchant conducting business in the Islamic world who has been granted safe conduct).
47. The language used (*cima' lafzı ile*) suggests that Zeyd's curse contains sexual connotations.
48. As they are non-Muslims.
49. In Islamic law there are two major types of offenses—*hadd* offenses, which are conceptualized as crimes against religion (as they are condemned in the *Qur'an*), and *jinayat* offenses. *Hadd* offenses are to be prosecuted by an Islamic state, whereas for *jinayat* offenses, the state is not obliged to prosecute on its own initiative, but it has to provide proper adjudication if a plaintiff presents a case.
50. Or “obediently,” that is, if she did not resist.
51. The obvious logic of the answer is that Zeyd, being an infidel (re-)captured by Muslims in the Abode of War and having been brought there against his free will, preserved his original protected status of *dhimmi* and hence he could not be enslaved.

52. The assumption here is that Amr had become a Muslim by association as a minor dependant of his father Zeyd, hence he could not be enslaved.
53. *Jizya* (Tr. *cizye*)—a poll tax levied on dhimmis in Islamic societies. It is conceptualized as a tax dhimmis pay in exchange for the protection accorded to them by the Islamic state on whose territory they permanently reside. Payment of the *jizya* is also understood as a mark of dhimmis' subordinate status.
54. That is, the residence of non-Muslims in close proximity to the mosque has not prompted local Muslims to relocate elsewhere.
55. A land tax levied on non-Muslims.
56. That is, his faith should be "renewed."
57. "Horos," as used here, obviously refers to "horo" (Slavic) or "hora" (Greek)—a round dance popular with Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. The word is often used to denote any kind of traditional folk dance in the Balkans.
58. The situation described possibly refers to descendants of converts to Islam.
59. The assumption here is that the conquered land is populated mostly or substantially by non-Muslims but that some native Muslims speak the local language. This situation may have led to the jurist's inclination to define the local language as one associated primarily with "infidels" and "infidelity." On the other hand, the Muslims who are said to "have settled" upon or following the conquest of the land must have come from a "core area" of the Islamic world and must have spoken a language firmly identified with Islam (in the jurist's mind) such as Turkish. A good hypothetical example in the age of Ebu's-Su'ud could be Bosnia or some other parts of the Balkans, such as the western Rhodopes, which had predominantly Slavic-speaking populations but also featured rapidly growing native (Slavic-speaking) Muslim communities. Compare to the next fatwa by Ebu's-Su'ud Efendi (No. 68) as well as to the related rulings of 'Abdürrahim Efendi (Nos. 69 and 70).

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III. The Night Debates at Jahangir's Court

'ABD AL-SATTAR'S *MAJALIS-I JAHANGIRI*

CORINNE LEFÈVRE

Composed between 1608 and 1611, the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* differ substantially from the other known literary works of the scholar and courtier 'Abd al-Sattar ibn Qasim Lahauri (d. after 1619). These productions consist of a series of translations that were intimately connected with the role of cultural broker their author assumed at the Mughal court during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They may be roughly divided into two groups: (1) translations from Latin, cowritten with Jerónimo Xavier (d. 1617), the head of the third Jesuit mission to the Mughal empire (1595–1615), aimed at familiarizing the royal elite with the Greco-Roman and Christian foundations of contemporary European culture;¹ and (2) adaptation or translation of works written in Arabic (*al-Hikmat al-Khalida* by Ibn Miskawayh, 986–992) or in a highly Arabicized Persian (*Zafar Nama* by Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, 1427–1428).² If the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* also bear the imprint of the cultural dialogue the Mughals promoted with the West as well as with different regions of Asia,³ their composition followed an altogether different logic because it was triggered by 'Abd al-Sattar's recent initiation into the imperial Sufi order.

On first reading, however, the text may simply be described as a record of the night sessions of the court of Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) held in the *diwan-i khass* (hall of private audience) between the fourth and sixth year of his reign. Here we find written down—in indirect speech or, most often, in dialogues reported in direct speech—contemporary imperial discussions on a vast variety of topics, to the almost complete exclusion of the major political events of the reign. It is thus a highly oral work, which gives pride of place to literary (especially poetic), religious,

historical, and scientific subjects, in accordance with the emperor's well-known multifaceted curiosity.⁴ Jahangir's interlocutors, for their part, reflect the cosmopolitanism of the Mughal court: besides members of the composite imperial elite, the sessions included ambassadors, poets, and dignitaries who had recently arrived from Iran and Central Asia, as well as a range of religious specialists, from Brahmins and Muslim 'ulama' to Jesuit and Jewish scholars. In other words, 'Abd al-Sattar offers us a window onto one of the key institutions of intellectual life in early modern Islamic societies, that is, the majlis—a place of meeting and the sessions held there, under the patronage of members of the elite, first among them the sultan.⁵ In Islamic court culture, these *majalis* were conceived of as an essential attribute of sovereignty and functioned simultaneously as a channel and stage for royal patronage, as an instrument for the acquisition of knowledge, and as entertainment. More specifically, 'Abd al-Sattar presents us with some selections from the favorite "pastime" of the participants in these exclusive salons—debates (sing., *jadāl*) and disputations (sing., *munazara*) in a wide range of fields. As shown by the extracts translated below and by treatises written from the eighth century on, detailing the rules according to which debates should be conducted (*adab al-jadal*), these discussions were highly codified dialogues: the audience was not supposed to intervene, except when requested to do so by the monarch, who acted as the ultimate arbiter of the majlis.⁶

Even though the courtly tradition of the majlis and the literary genre of the *munazara* had a tremendous impact on both the structure and substance of the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, another possible influence is that of the catechistical dialogues with which 'Abd al-Sattar had become familiar through his association with the Jesuits and their missionary literature. Attractive as this hypothesis may appear to the proponents of transcultural encounters, it is not one that the author would willingly have endorsed. As hinted above, 'Abd al-Sattar makes it clear at several points in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* that his text was to be read as the *malfuzat* of Jahangir,⁷ which literally means "utterances"; the word refers more specifically to a genre of Sufi literature that recorded the teachings of *pīrs* (spiritual masters). Although *malfuzat* were already popular in thirteenth-century North India, it was Amir Hasan Sijzi who really established a reputation for the genre, with the composition in 1322 of his *Fava'id al-Fu'ad*, an account of the conversations of his own *pir*, the renowned Chishti shaykh Nizam al-Din Auliya' (d. 1325).⁸ Interestingly enough, it is precisely the same *Fava'id al-fu'ad* that 'Abd al-Sattar explicitly acknowledges as a model for his own *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, which he considered a spiritual handbook (*dastur al-'amal*) for the newly enrolled disciples of the emperor.⁹ Although a parallel reading of the *Majalis* and the *Fava'id* does not reveal any significant concordance between the texts, the affiliation between the *Majalis* and the genre of *malfuzat* is crucial in at least three respects: at the level of literary form it lies at the root of the dialogical structure and *modus operandi* of the text; ideologically, it propels Jahangir to the forefront of spirituality as the ultimate *pir*;¹⁰ and third, it means that the audience of the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*,

a work designed by 'Abd al-Sattar specifically for the use of the emperor's disciples, must have been restricted to a small circle, as otherwise revealed by the one extant manuscript.

As a *mal'fuzat*, the main function of the *Majalis* was to unveil the saintly and messianic nature of the monarch who called himself a "universal manifestation" (*mazhar-i kull*) of God¹¹—something 'Abd al-Sattar skillfully managed to do through the narration of Jahangir's oneiric encounters with the divine,¹² the miracles he performed thanks to his capacities as a seer,¹³ and, most important for the purpose of this chapter, the discussions he conducted with a large spectrum of religious scholars. As has been repeatedly pointed out by a number of historians, the inter-religious debates of the Mongol era were a precedent, in both general policy and courtly practice, for those held in Mughal times.¹⁴ The Mongol tradition had been reintroduced by Akbar (r. 1556–1605) as a part of the emperor's patronage of multiple religions, an ambitious political project aimed at rallying behind his banner subordinates of all persuasions that included funding non-Muslim religious institutions and figures as well as the translation of Hindu, Christian, and Jewish scriptures into Persian. However, the best-known and most emblematic aspect of his policy was certainly the theological disputations organized in the *'ibadat khana* (hall of prayer) of the newly built capital of Fatehpur Sikri between 1575 and 1581. After an initial phase during which the discussions were limited to Muslim participants, representatives of a wide variety of faiths (Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians) and sects were invited to take part in the debates when they were resumed in 1578. If a number of accounts of the *'ibadat khana* disputations are available today, it is worth emphasizing that none of their authors—be it Jesuit missionaries, the subversive 'Abd al-Qadir Bada'uni, or Brahmin and Jain scholars—seems to have been much interested in conveying to their respective audience the full breadth of the interreligious dialogues that were taking place at the Mughal court, most of them depicting the reception of their community leaders by the emperor under the best possible light whereas others, such as Bada'uni, were openly critical of Akbar's spiritual peregrinations and claims.¹⁵ In other words, these accounts all bear the imprint of a sectarian bias that tends to obscure the imperial ideology underlying the organization of such interfaith debates and, more generally, the Mughal religious pluralism most famously epitomized by the motto of *sulh-i kull* (universal peace).

Composed under the close supervision (if not at the instigation) of Akbar's eldest son and successor Jahangir, 'Abd al-Sattar's *Majalis-i Jahangiri* are no doubt equally biased but their bias has the advantage of providing a more comprehensive overview of the theological disputations presided over by the emperor. In contrast to Jesuit or Jain accounts, the work does not reduce the religious polyphony at work at the Mughal court to a series of face-to-face encounters between Islam and Christianity or Islam and Jainism from which adherents to other religions were (almost completely) excluded. On the contrary, one of the most interesting aspects of the text is that it discusses Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and—although to a much more

limited extent—Judaism in the same breath. Such an inclusiveness was a direct reflection of the religious ideology Jahangir had inherited from his father Akbar, a form of ecumenism that should not, however, be mistaken for a spirit of tolerance. Its overarching principle was the Mughal's spiritual hegemony: every religion had a place in the empire as long as its adherents recognized the monarch as the saint of the age and abided by his laws, both temporal and spiritual.

As a matter of fact, another striking feature of the theological debates recorded in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* is their common focus on the legal dimension of the religious traditions represented at court with, however, the exception of the exchanges with the Jesuits, which were primarily concerned with scriptural and doctrinal questions—the authenticity of the Gospel, the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of Trinity—and various episodes of the life of the holy family, as is illustrated in the first extract translated below. In contrast to the Jesuits' version of their dealings at the Mughal court, 'Abd al-Sattar gives a far more sophisticated account of the arguments used by both sides, highlighting by the same token their shared mastery of Aristotelian logic. He also conveys a very different picture of Jahangir's position vis-à-vis Christianity: according to Jerónimo Xavier's reports, monogamy was the only true obstacle standing in the way of the emperor's conversion, but the Mughal is here depicted as fully participating in the critic of the Christian tenets conducted by Muslim 'ulama'.¹⁶ If, then, the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* provide a formidable counterpoint to the long-prevailing Jesuit vision of the Mughals' reception of Christian ideas, the text also sheds a new light on the monarch's involvement in the sphere of religious law and on the imperial management of the legal aspects of religious pluralism.

Most of the theological disputations recorded by 'Abd al-Sattar bear the imprint of Jahangir's willingness to gain knowledge of the socioreligious norms that regulated the daily life of his subjects. As shown by the last three extracts translated below, questions of jurisprudence largely dominated the monarch's debates with Muslim 'ulama'¹⁷ as well as his fewer discussions with Hindu figures.¹⁸ Likewise, the recent translation into Persian by one "Yusuf the Jew" of the *Suhuf-i Ibrahim* (Scrolls or Book of Abraham) led to two successive discussions of Judaism's prescriptions for marital life.¹⁹ A fainter echo of the emperor's keen interest in religious norms is even to be found in his exchanges with the Jesuits, who were ordered during the very first majlis to clarify the provisions of canon law regarding remarriage.²⁰ Jahangir's interventions in all such discussions consistently illustrate his determination to follow in the steps of his predecessor Akbar as chief *mujtahid* or *juris consultus* of the empire and of the various communities it included, be they Muslim or not.²¹ By positioning himself along such lines, the monarch meant to be recognized by these communities as the supreme legal authority of the time, and beyond that to demonstrate his messianic ability to act as a renewer (*mujaddid*) of the "world of religion" through the exercise of his intellectual faculties ('*aql*'), which he considered a direct source of knowledge.

There is little doubt that, for Jahangir, presiding over the new order ushered in by the passing of the first Islamic millennium involved implementation of Akbar's messianic program through his own continued efforts to reform religious law and to go beyond existent normative frameworks—missions that were traditionally described as the hallmarks of the Mahdi or Messiah. Under Jahangir's dispensation, 'Abd al-Sattar writes unequivocally, "the ancient laws were destroyed and the foundations of justice renewed."²² Such a deconstructionist approach to law did not, however, equally influence the various socioreligious norms at work in the empire. If the snapshots provided by the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* are any indication of a larger trend, it seems that, with regard to non-Muslim legal traditions at least, the emperor's interventions ultimately resulted in the legitimation of existing rules. An altogether different image emerges from the much more numerous jurisprudential debates pertaining to the shari'a, whose provisions the monarch considered either inadequate or contradictory.

Despite the universal idiom in which the spiritual pretensions of the ruler were formulated and the presence, in the night sessions of the *diwan-i khass*, of representatives of Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism, there is little doubt that Jahangir's efforts to renovate and reform the "world of religion" were primarily directed at Islam and at those 'ulama' who, in his eyes, were trapped in the formalism of the shari'a and satisfied with legal conformism (*taqlid*). It comes out particularly clearly from the last two extracts translated below. During the ninety-sixth majlis, shari'a is depicted as ultimately coming up against the reason of state. The long debate that occurred in the course of the forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions indicates that the Mughal's ambitions in matters of religious law went far beyond the sphere of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and touched upon its very sources or *usul*—first among them the Qur'anic revelation that Jahangir seems to have had no qualms about expurgating.

TRANSLATION

*Jesuits and Christianity at the Mughal Court (Majlis 29, Rabi' II, 1019 AH, Fifth Regnal Year, Thursday Night, pp. 70–75)*²³

Gifts from the grandees of the port of Goa were paraded before the most sacred gaze [of Jahangir]. Among all the wise Frankish people, one—who was well-known for his bigotry, his harsh speech and his hot temper²⁴—stood in attendance and proceeded to praise his own faith and criticize the religion of Islam. Mahabat Khan²⁵ had noticed his bigotry—which veils justice and is [a form of] ungratefulness—and teased him [about it] but he, because of his extreme prejudice, persisted in his agitation and in talking nonsense. Because the blessed eyes [of Jahangir] were continually turned toward excellence and caviling was not part of his most holy

nature, he approved of his [the Jesuit's] firmness and steadfastness, and said: "A thief had been hanged. One of the doctors of the [Christian] religion passed before him and, being deeply impressed by the sight, he said: 'May I be the ransom of such steadfastness. He [the thief] remained firm in whatever he was and died [for it].'"

The Frank suddenly said: "Whoever has a sound mind and a clear-sighted eye will not chose the religion of Muhammad." As it had come to the holiest mind of this enlightened emperor that this most humble disciple ['Abd al-Sattar] was well versed in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith and in the other circumstances of the apostles of this great man [Jesus] and was well informed of the degrees of falsity of this invented religion—which they attribute to the Lord Jesus, [the following] came on the blessed tongue [of Jahangir]: "Come forward, 'Abd al-Sattar!" I placed my head on the ground and then stepped forward. I was ordered [by the emperor]: "Listen and speak!" I saw that this cross-worshipper, taking advantage of His Majesty's generous disposition and kindness to strangers, had overstepped the circle of etiquette and was saying whatever he wanted in order to refute the faith of Muhammad and to criticize the religion of Islam. It came to the mind of this most humble disciple that, although [the practice of] undermining one's argument had disappeared from the world in the blessed time of this just emperor, today it had become appropriate in the debate. ['Abd al-Sattar thought so] because it is very imprudent to be responsible for the argument and the burden of proof in every case, but particularly in this matter [of Muhammad's prophethood] at this time and place. This is why he [the Jesuit] was asked [by 'Abd al-Sattar]: "Padre! First, tell [us]: do you believe in prophethood as such? Do you reject the prophethood of Muhammad in particular or prophethood in general?" He was apparently aware of this most humble disciple's intention, because he answered: "Why do you ask? What I am saying is that Muhammad is not a prophet. It is your job to prove his prophethood." At this point, the blessed gaze [of Jahangir] fell upon this most humble disciple, as if to say: "Answer to that." I presented that: "Peace be upon the *qibla*²⁶ of religion and the world [Jahangir]! What I meant by this question is this: whatever he affirms must be properly debated with him. In other words: if he is among the spokesmen of prophethood, then we must debate with him about the proof [existing] on this particular question [Muhammad's prophethood], in the same way as those who believe in prophethood discuss with each other. And if he does not believe in prophethood at all, then we must consider [the possibility of] a debate between a spokesman of prophecy and a complete unbeliever." These words pleased [Jahangir]. The inveterate Padre said: "I do not know the proper Muslim vocabulary. What I am saying is that I am a Christian and that my religion is that of the Gospel." I said: "I do not believe this book [of yours] to be the Gospel, nor this religion of yours to be the religion of the Lord Jesus and of the Gospel." Having thus cornered him, I shifted the burden of proof unto him. The task became difficult for him. At this point, the most sacred attention [of Jahangir] was diverted and the debate was suspended.

After half an hour, he [the Jesuit] again requested that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! We pray that God gives 'Abd al-Sattar to us and that our religion becomes his good fortune. We hope that he will become a Christian by [Jahangir's] sublime command." Mahabat Khan told him jokingly: "We have complete trust in 'Abd al-Sattar's understanding and comprehension. God knows that if he adopts your religion, we will immediately make the choice of your religion as well." [The following] came on the most sacred tongue [of Jahangir]: "'Abd al-Sattar! Come forward." Having kissed the ground of good conduct, I moved forward and offered prayers [to the emperor]. [Jahangir] said that: "We are the universal manifestation [of God] and, if you wish to become a Christian, it would not displease us. While we dislike someone becoming a [missing word], we do not mind it if you wish to become a Christian." I presented that: "Peace be upon the *qibla* of religion and the world! Am I to become a Christian on [your order] or on the supposition that [Christianity] is true and reasonable?" [Jahangir] said that: "This is not a command. What we are saying is that if the truth and reasonableness [of Christianity] have become manifest to you, do not consider us in your choice." I said: "If it is on the supposition that [Christianity] is reasonable, then my opinion is that their religion is the most false, the most impure and the filthiest of all religions; in my eyes, even the religion of the Hindus is better than theirs!" [The following] came on the most sacred tongue [of Jahangir]: "That the religion of the Hindus might be better than theirs is not reasonable to [our] holiest mind." I presented that: "Peace be upon the *qibla* of religion and the world! I said so because the Hindus do not claim that God has been killed and crucified." [Jahangir] said that: "Hindus do not claim that God has been crucified, but they claim that God has united with twelve thousand women in a single day and has impregnated them [all]." I presented: "Putting aside these [last] words, now that [the belief that] the Frankish religion is superior to the faith of the Hindus has entered the heart of His Majesty, it is certain that it is [actually] so [and] that their religion is better than the faith of the Hindus. Peace be upon His Majesty! Does the just emperor [Jahangir] approve [the fact] that I believe in a God who has been crucified naked, received five thousand lashes, on whose face people have spat [so much] that blood came out of his pores, whose head has been clad in a crown of thorns, and who has been mocked from all sides? And this [account] is narrated in their religion and their Gospel." This false belief of theirs weighed upon the truth-loving mind of the emperor, and the Padre was ordered to answer. He said: "We do not say that God was killed. This is a calumny made up by 'Abd al-Sattar. We say that Jesus has both divinity and humanity [within himself], and these things—mentioned by this ['Abd al-Sattar]—have befallen his humanity and not his divinity." I bent head to the ground and exposed that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! Through such premises, the Padre wants His Majesty to ask how it happened, his intention being to waste time by a lengthy account of such incomprehensible premises and [thus] to use up the day. But I hope that it will soon become clear to the most sacred attention [of the emperor] that what he does not want to say, he should be forced to say it, willy-nilly, so that the truth will flow off his

tongue without him realizing it.” The Padre was asked the following: “According to your faith, has Lord Jesus been killed?”

THE PADRE: “Yes, he has been killed.”

‘ABD AL-SATTAR: “Has he received five thousand and five hundred lashes?”

THE PADRE: “Yes, he has.”

‘ABD AL-SATTAR: “Has his head been clad in a crown of thorns?”

THE PADRE: “Yes, it has.”

‘ABD AL-SATTAR: “Have people spat on his face?”

THE PADRE: “Yes, they have.”

‘ABD AL-SATTAR: “Now, tell [us]: is Lord Jesus God or isn’t he?”

THE PADRE: “He is.”

I then presented that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! It comes out clearly from these premises that, according to their faith, God has been crucified and suffered such injustice and abasement.”

I also exposed that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! I have had long conversations with them on this matter. The account of their wise men is the following: ‘He [Jesus] has both divinity and humanity [within himself]. Because he possesses humanity, we call him man. And because he possesses divinity, we call him God. Just as we call white whatever has [elements of] white, and black whatever has [elements of] black. Therefore, because he possesses divinity and has endured these travails, we necessarily believe that God has been killed and crucified and suffered such abasement and hardships because of us.’ ” In short, by the divine assistance and the favor of the Holy Spirit, these words stupefied and bewildered the Padre, who exposed with anxiety that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! What he [‘Abd al-Sattar] says about [Jesus] having died in dishonor and humiliation is spoken ignorantly. For instance, if His Majesty were to send one of his choice slaves—such as Khan Jahan²⁷—to [another] land and the people of this land became hostile toward him and treated him badly, this would not be [the mark of] his abasement and humiliation but of his glory.” I said: “Peace be upon His Majesty! What he did not want to say [explicitly], God—may He be exalted—has placed it on his tongue and made him unwittingly utter the truth, [that is] he compares Lord Jesus—whom they call God—to one of the slaves sent by His Majesty. And the truth, in this [comparison] as well, is that he [Jesus] has been sent and that his sender is [a] different [person].” [The following] came on the most sacred tongue [of Jahangir]: “Yes, [he has been] sent, [he has been] sent.” I further said: “Peace be upon His Majesty! The entire Gospel says: ‘He has sent me. Believe in the one who has been sent by Him.’ ” [The Padre] started to explain his religious tenets and, when he mentioned that Lord Jesus had not taught the Gospel for thirty years, I presented that, “Peace be upon the *qibla* of religion and the world! Now, I would like to ask the Padre [the following question]: After these thirty years, when he started to teach the Gospel, what did he say? To order the Gospel to be offered to the most sacred view [of Jahangir] would be

a very good thing. Peace be upon the *qibla* of religion and the world! Their Gospel is kept in the imperial treasury. And this most humble disciple has also [a copy of] it. If he [the Padre] does not give an account thereof, let it be ordered that [this] slave do so. Their Gospel starts as follows: the Messiah is the son of so-and-so, son of so-and-so, up to Ibrahim [Abraham]—peace be upon him! [The genealogy goes back] to Da'ud [David] through fourteen intermediaries, from Da'ud to the Babylonian exile through fourteen intermediaries, and from him to Ibrahim through another fourteen. It is then said that there was a girl [Mary], born in such and such way, who married a carpenter by the name of Yusuf [Joseph]. When she was thirteen years old, an angel of God [Gabriel] appeared to her and she became pregnant. By the Cesar's order, which concerned everybody, she left for Bethlehem, in the country of Da'ud, alongside with Yusuf; there, in an isolated house, she gave birth to a boy. Three astrologer-kings [the Magi] came from the West under the guidance of a star and worshipped the boy. Afterward, Yusuf, following the order of the angel, took him and fled to Egypt. When Herod, who was looking for the boy, failed to find him, he ordered the children of this city—between two and four years old—to be killed so that he [Jesus] be killed in their midst. Yusuf stayed there for four years. On the instructions of the angel, he then brought the boy back to Nazareth, where he grew up. Until he was thirty years old, he remained amongst this people, performed spiritual exercises while belonging to the faith of Musa [Moses]. Thereupon, he fasted for forty days and began to preach the religion of the Gospel in the city.

“Such and such people started to believe in him. He resided in a certain village for a few days, and some time passed. This is how his story is told [in the Gospel]. Peace be upon His Majesty! What new information did he bring after thirty years? These things [he preached], his own mother and relatives knew them better than him because they had happened before their eyes. What was the point of repeating them? Besides, peace be upon His Majesty, they [the Franks] say, and it is also [written] in their Gospel, that on the day when he [Jesus] came forth to the people, his first words were as follows: ‘Repent, the kingdom of heaven is near, believe in my Gospel!’ Now, I want to ask the Padre: Was this Gospel [mentioned by Jesus] the same as the Gospel in which the events of his life and death are described and which was written fifteen or twenty years after his death? If so, what is the significance of his words ‘believe in my Gospel’? For it is evident from these words that there was a Gospel, different from the Gospel [of the Franks], in which he [Jesus] wanted people to believe. What happened to this [first] Gospel? Marqus [Mark]—one of the writers of the Gospel—says: ‘We write down what we have heard, the story of [Jesus’s] actions [as given] by the ancients who were there from the start, and what we have seen.’ His apostles and the writers of this book call it the “story” of Jesus, while they [the Franks] call it the Gospel and book of God. Peace be upon His Majesty! There is no connection between them and the religion and faith of the Messiah. Should any of their prayers, fasts, and other practices be proved to come from the Lord Jesus or from the book of the Gospel, then let everything I have said be a lie! In the most sacred service [of His Majesty], I can

demonstrate in a hundred [different] ways the irrationality of each of their premises.” [My words] were agreeable to the emperor lover of justice; this insolent one who persisted in falsehood [the Padre] having been confounded, he retreated slowly, his lips dry and sweating profusely.

*Discussing Hinduism with Brahmins (Majlis 39, Rajab 8,
1019 AH, Fifth Regnal Year, Saturday Night, pp. 95–98)*

On that day, something strange was disclosed by the divine manifestation [that is, Jahangir]. A Brahman, who was in the service of Ram Das Kachhwaha,²⁸ had been summoned [in the private hall of audience] [. . .]. As soon as the blessed eyes [of the emperor] fell upon him, [the following] came on his most sacred tongue: “We have seen you earlier in such place and at such time, when we were coming back from attending His Majesty whose court is the divine throne [Akbar]. We had asked you: ‘Who are you and what is your occupation? Why don’t you wear pajamas?’ In lieu of underwear, [Jahangir explained], he had a piece of cloth tied [on the waist]—the ‘dhuti,’ which is customary for the people of India—and you presented that: ‘We, the Brahmins from Gujarat, do not wear pajamas.’ ” [. . .] Patan Misr²⁹—one of the reliable Hindu wise men of this court—exposed that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! Brahmins from Gujarat reproach us for eating meat, and we say [back] to them: ‘You abstain from meat but you drink water out of ‘mashk’ [flasks], which are made of the skin of living beings.’ ” The gist of his speech was that not wearing pajamas and being obligated by such things is mere imitation and irrational. As much as they [the Hindus] worship the cow, they hold its remains to be more polluted than those of horses and donkeys and its mouth to be the most impure of all its organs, even more than its dung. And because [the emperor] inquired about the reasons [of such beliefs], he [Pathan Mishra] represented that: “In ancient times, when the tyranny and violence of Bala-Vrtra, which is one of the names of Vrtra³⁰—that is to say, [a creature] of demonic nature—prevailed in the world, the heads of the *devatas* [devas or deities]—that is, the angelic worshippers of God—gathered together, came before Brahma—who holds the thread of Creation in his hands—and asked for a remedy [to the situation]. He answered: ‘If you use the bones of a Brahman named Dadhich³¹ to make arms and weapons of war, you will be able to destroy him [the demon].’ Dadhich was one of the [great] ascetics of the time.

“Following the advice of Brahma, this group went to find Dadhich. He was in a state of meditation, and they waited a long time. They did not dare to wake him up and to bring him back to consciousness as they feared the blaze of his splendor. [The following] was finally decided: ‘We have to bring in a cow and make sure that it bends over the ascetic and licks his back: this way, he will awaken and we will be safe from the damage that his splendor may cause.’ They said that because protection of the cow is obligatory for all in their Brahmanical religion. They acted upon what had been decided, and awakened the ascetic. They subsequently offered him their purpose with gentle and appropriate words. Dadhich said: ‘I made a vow to

God to bathe once in every *tirt* [tirtha] on the surface of the earth, and I have not fulfilled it yet. Therefore, I cannot give you my bones as long as my vow remains unaccomplished.' 'Tirt' means a place of worship in the language of India. Having brought together every *tirt* on the surface of the earth, they [the deities] presented them to him; and because his vow had been fulfilled, he entrusted them with his bones. However, he cursed the cow and said [to it]: 'May your mouth always remain impure!' This is why they do not consider the remains of the cow [to be] pure." [The following] came on the blessed tongue of the wise emperor: "It seems strange and unbelievable that that godly person [Dadhich], despite his knowledge and wisdom, should curse the cow, which they worship. Especially that [particular] cow that had thus been a cause of such good fortune, because that which would have been achieved after a great and long suffering [Dadhich bathing in every tirt], happened to him in one instant at his own house." Pathan Misr was amazed at hearing such profitable and reasonable words and, by way of immediate confirmation, he exposed that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! What has been said is out of [correct] sequence. Isn't it true that, as soon as his [Dadhich's] eyes fell upon the cow, before he even saw them [the deities] and achieved his desire, he had [already] cursed the cow?" [Jahangir] commented: "Well said." He [also] added: "Why is the aforementioned story the reason given to explain the aversion to the remains of the cow? The motive may be [related to the fact that] the cow cleans its nose with its tongue and, if such story [ever] happened, the following may be stated: [when] the aforementioned ascetic cursed [the cow], he said: 'This tongue of yours which you have used to lick me has disturbed my meditation; may you spend all your time licking your nose and cleaning it from its filth!' And because it is filthy, whatever its tongue touches becomes execrable. The fact that the cow licked the ascetic's back with its tongue is a clear confirmation of what we have said." Pathan Misr and all the fortunate participants in the assembly touched the ground with their head:

[VERSE]

Praise to the emperor and to the imperial assembly
May this place of gathering be made prosperous by you!

*Abrogating Qur'anic Verses? (Majalis 49–50, Sha'ban 28–29, 1019 AH,
Fifth Regnal Year, Tuesday & Wednesday Night, pp. 121–26)*

After the evening praise of God, [Jahangir] sat on the throne of felicity and, turning to Khan A'zam,³² he said: "Today, a member of this assembly has presented a story to us. He has recited a [Qur'anic] verse, the signification of which is [as follows]: to you your religion, and to us our religion. Now, [our] most sacred mind cannot remember which verse it was." Khan A'zam reminded [the emperor] that it was [part of] the "Qul Ya" sura.³³ And as the signification [of the sura] came to [Jahangir's] most sacred attention, [the following] flew on his holy tongue: "Why kill

the unbelievers?" Meanwhile, the qadi of the army had arrived and, having saluted [the emperor], he presented that: "This sura has been in use until the time when the order to kill the unbelievers was revealed. After its revelation, the sura was abrogated." [The following] came on the blessed tongue [of Jahangir]: "If it has been abrogated, what is the point of keeping it within the Qur'an? And what is advisable concerning its recitation?" The qadi exposed that: "The meaning has been abrogated, but not the words." The *mir 'adl*³⁴ Sayyid Ahmad [Qadiri]³⁵ explained the sura [commanding to kill the unbelievers] according to the path of divine unicity and brought to the most sacred attention [of the emperor] some useful things, the main points of which being [divine] unicity and the announcement of the end of unbelievers and of their persevering in unbelief. [The following] came on the holy tongue [of Jahangir]: "Mir! This is all fine, [but] we were referring to the abrogation of the [aforementioned] command, which concerns another sura. This statement and interpretation [of yours] do not bear upon our debate."

Meanwhile, Maulana Ruzbih Shirazi³⁶ and Maulana Shukrallah Shirazi³⁷—who had recently arrived from the Deccan—had saluted [the emperor] and, following [Jahangir's] sublime indication, Maulana Ruzbih presented that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! The Qur'an commands us two things: to recite its words and to act according to their meaning. It may well be that [the injunction] to act according to the meaning be abrogated, [and that the command] to recite the words as they are remains: this is why the signification of the abrogation and of its [different] types must be explained. In other words, abrogation—which has come to refer to the nullification of one legal injunction by another—can be of several kinds: one is the abrogation of the meaning but not of the words; the second is the abrogation of the words, but not of the meaning; the third is the abrogation of both the words and the meaning." [The following] came on the most sacred tongue [of Jahangir]: "Words are made to express and manifest meanings. Whenever the meaning—which is the object [of words]—is abrogated, what is the point of preserving the words which, [on their own], have no object but are [mere] parasites? It would certainly be better to expel them from the Qur'an." Mulla Shukrallah Shirazi presented that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! There are several profitable reasons for preserving abrogated verses and reciting them. Among them are the inimitability and the perfect elegance of language and eloquence of the Qur'an. Besides, divine wisdom demands that the abrogated ruling remain on the page of the time. If the words are removed, such requirement will not be fulfilled." [The following] came on the blessed tongue of the wise emperor: "There are many examples of this elegance of language, eloquence and inimitability in these other parts [of the Qur'an] whose words are themselves abrogated—why are they removed from the Qur'an?" He exposed that: "Divine wisdom demands that this verse be not in the Qur'an." [Jahangir] said that: "Explain such a wisdom, we want [to hear] a rational speech." He represented that: "Divine mysteries are known only to God." [The emperor] commanded: "Say: I am unable to give a rational explanation and I stand guilty." Having confessed to his weakness, the mulla lowered his head [in submission].

Khan A'zam exposed that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! It is impossible to [provide an] answer to the fine distinctions and subtleties of the emperor who gloriously sits on the throne of investigation. Let it be ordered that they [the mullas] should turn to their books and report to the most sacred attention [of Jahangir] whatever their mind settles on. Because ascertaining and disclosing the truth was the object [of the debate], this was agreeable [to the emperor] [. . .]."

The discussion resumed the following night and concluded as follows:

After an hour had passed, Khan A'zam and the aforementioned mullas returned; having come forward, Maulana Ruzbih submitted that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! In matters of abrogation, the grandees of every faith are of one mind, and no Jewish or Christian sect disagrees on that topic. So, divine majesty has commanded us two things—to act according to the meaning [of Qur'anic verses] and to recite their words; if this same God abolishes one of these two commands, the one that is left remains as it is, and there is nothing alien to reason [in that]." [The following] came on the most sacred tongue [of the emperor]: "This is undeniable, but we do not want the recitation to be useless and its utility should be made intelligible to us: when words are [mere] parasites of the meaning and are only meant for the elegance of rhetoric, what is the use of reciting such [words] that have been deprived of the honor of meaning?" He presented that: "Since the Qur'an is the word of God, its sheer recitation is a meritorious act and a step toward the hereafter." [Jahangir] said: "Performing a meritorious act is indeed of great utility but, by this logic, no Qur'anic verse should be abrogated as to recitation. However, you consider the reading of the verse 'al-shaykh wa-l-shaykha'³⁸ to be abrogated." He said that: "We do not consider it to be part of the Qur'an. That which has served as the definition of the Qur'an, consisting of whatever lies between its two covers and has come to us through uninterrupted transmission by means of Jabra'il [Gabriel], does not apply to it." [Jahangir] said: "Is it not believed to be the word of God?" They represented that: "We do not call every word of God the 'Qur'an.' Whereas sacred hadith (*hadis-i qudsi*) are words of God, we do not call them 'Qur'an.' " It was ordered that: "Explain the meaning of 'sacred hadith.' " They submitted in unison that: "We call 'sacred hadith' whatever the Prophet has received from God without the intercession of the angel [Gabriel], and 'Qur'an' whatever he has received through the intermediary of the angel." [The following] came of the most sacred tongue [of the emperor]: "This is very surprising! Justice requires that whatever has come directly from God be higher in dignity, more trustworthy and certain." Qadi Shukr³⁹ exposed that: "In [the case of] sacred hadith—which have come directly [from God]—the meaning has been inspired in the heart of the Prophet; that is to say, the meaning is God's and the words are the Prophet's. [In the case of] the Qur'an, both the meaning and the words are God's. That is why recitation alone is useful." The wise emperor said: "Let us say what has come to the imperial mind at the same time!" And he said: "Because everything is proved by a witness and because here [in the Qur'an], Jabra'il is God's and the Prophet's witness, it is therefore proper to trust it more, Jabra'il himself being worth several witnesses."

*Shari'a and the Reason of State (Majlis 96, Rabi' II 8, 1020 AH,
Sixth Regnal Year, Tuesday Night, pp. 236–38)*

An hour had passed since nightfall when [Jahangir], having gloriously and auspiciously emerged [from his apartments] and sat on the throne, remembered the qadi and the *mir 'adl*. After the qadi had had the felicity to kiss the [royal] threshold, [the following] came on the blessed tongue [of the emperor]: “If a man divorces his wife without her knowledge, is the divorce valid?” The qadi exposed that: “Yes, it is.” [Jahangir] asked again: “Although the wife has not been informed of the divorce?” He submitted that: “[Yes,] although she has not been informed.” Seizing the occasion, he brought to the most sacred attention [of the emperor] the [different] oaths of divorce—irrevocable, revocable, and triple. [Jahangir] then said: “We command that the man should inform his wife of the divorce; otherwise she may consider herself legal[ly married] to him and commit forbidden and illegal acts with her husband.” The qadi presented that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! These words [of yours] are most agreeable to reason. If she is not informed [of the divorce] and unaware of her becoming illegal to him, she will necessarily expect from her husband things that he should not do, and look at him with boldness and audaciousness although her [mere] looking at him is illicit. It is therefore better that he informs her of the divorce so that she may know herself to be illegal to him and not behave intimately [with him].” Thereupon [Jahangir] said: “Qadi! What about someone who takes possession of someone else’s house by force? Khan A’zam says that his prayer is not valid [anymore].” The qadi exposed that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! According to the opinion of some, it is not valid but the most correct opinion is that it is [still] valid; however, it is defective inasmuch as divine worship requires purity of cloth, body, and place. A house that has been seized by force cannot be called a pure place. This is why the act of worship is said to be defective.” [The emperor] further said to the qadi: “And what if the emperor of the time seizes someone’s house tyrannically?” The qadi presented that: “Peace be upon His Majesty! The just emperor will never capture [anything] tyrannically.” The conversation thereafter fell on the land of Raj[a] ‘Ali Khan,⁴⁰ the commander of Khandesh. [Jahangir] remarked: “Khan A’zam says that the conquest of their kingdom was not just; since he [Raja ‘Ali Khan] was a Muslim, to attack Muslims without legal justification and to conquer their kingdom was illicit.”⁴¹ Murtaza Khan⁴² represented that: “They were rebels, so what is wrong [with us conquering them]?” [The following] came on the most sacred tongue of the just emperor: “Khan A’zam himself is not present but we [will] speak on his behalf: “They were reciting the *khutba* [Friday sermon] and striking coins in your name: where was the rebellion [in that]? What other [token of] submission did you expect from their House to overthrow it?” ” Murtaza Khan exposed that: “Out of kindness, His Majesty whose court is the divine throne [Akbar] had sent a message to them, saying ‘Let go the uterine relatives and their kinsmen whom you hold in eternal captivity.’ [But] they

did not agree. Imperial justice commanded to free these helpless ones from their oppression." [The following] came on the blessed tongue [of Jahangir]: "The lord of a kingdom does a thousand things for [the sake of] royal affairs." Murtaza Khan represented that: "Their detention was illegal." [Jahangir] said: "Emperors always cause individual wrongs for the common good, just as [we did when] we imprisoned our son."⁴³

The qadi submitted that: "Emperors punish thieves by death, whereas, according to shari'a, a thief should not be executed but have his hand cut." Diyanat Khan⁴⁴ represented that: "Peace be upon His Majesty! When Mirza 'Abd al-Latif, after he had committed his father Mirza Ulugh Beg to the shepherds, issued a decree [sanctioning Ulugh Beg's confinement], every one apposed his seal [upon it], except the qadi who said [that] when he [Ulugh Beg] was emperor, he did whatever was advisable for the kingdom."⁴⁵ [Jahangir] said: "Yes, that is the way it is." And he with fortune and glory repeated these very words. He then asked the qadi: "These melodies and music we listen to, are they prohibited or lawful?" The qadi submitted that: "It is illicit, and even the sole fact of singing is not allowed." [Jahangir] said: "So why do the [Sufi] shaykhs do this [performing music and singing]?" He exposed that: "They say: 'Listening [to music] attracts us to God and brings [our] heart closer to the Truth.' But we do not consider this a good argument, since the jurists do not allow it." [Jahangir] said that: "Why is it said that the Prophet listened [to music], along with his wife 'A'isha, and had her listen to it?" He represented that: "Indeed, the author of the '*Avarif*'⁴⁶ states that, if what they say is true, it is undoubtedly a welcome evidence for the Sufis [in order to legitimate their practices]." And he related in detail the following story: "One day, two Abyssinian slave musicians arrived at the Prophet's house and started singing and playing drum, but the second caliph and commander of the faithful 'Umar forbid them [to do so] and said, 'Do not act this way in the house of the messenger of God'; however, the Prophet continued to listen and he even took 'A'isha's hand, passed it behind his head and placed it onto his shoulders." [The following] came on the blessed tongue [of Jahangir]: "Because the author of the '*Avarif*' [himself] specifies 'if this story is true,' it is clear that it is not." The qadi and the other people present all presented that: "What has come on the most sacred tongue [of the emperor] is right." May the highest God keep an eye on the emperor who appreciates subtleties!

NOTES

1. For a thorough reconsideration of the nature of 'Abd al-Sattar's collaboration with Xavier and an introduction to the texts produced as a result, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations: Catholics and Muslims in the Court of Jahangir (1608–11)," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 46, no. 4 (2009): 457–511. See also Setayesh Nooraninejad, "'Abd al-Sattar wa nuskha-i khatti-yi *Samarat al-falasifa* ['Abd al-Sattar and the manuscript of the *Samarat al-falasifa*]," *Ayina-i miras* 7, no. 1 (2009): 117–35; Pedro Moura Carvalho, comp., *Mir'āt al-quds* (*Mirror of*

- Holiness*): *a Life of Christ for Emperor Akbar. A Commentary on Father Jerome Xavier's Text and the Miniatures of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Acc. No. 2005. 145 by Pedro Moura Carvalho With a Translation and Annotated Transcription of the Text by Wheeler M. Thackston (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Adel Sidarus, "O espelho de príncipes de Jerônimo Xavier SJ dedicado ao imperador mogul (1609)," in *Caminhos Cruzados em Historia e Antropologia: Ensaios de Homenagem a Jill Dias*, ed. P. J. Havik, C. Saraiva, and J. A. Tavim (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2010), 37–50; and Corinne Lefèvre, "Mughal India—Muslim Asia—Europe: Circulation of Political Ideas and Instruments in Early Modern Times," in *Structures on the Move. Technologies of Governance in Transcultural Encounter*, ed. A. Flüchter and S. Richter (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2012), 131–37, for further insight into Xavier's *Mir'at al-Quds* (1602) and *Adab al-saltanat* (1609) and into 'Abd al-Sattar's *Samarat al-falasifa* (1603).
2. See 'Abd al-Sattar ibn Qasim Lahauri, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, ed. A. Naushahi and M. Nizami (Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2006), xlv (on the adaptation of the *Zafar Nama*), 90 and 127 (on the translation of the *al-Hikmat al-Khalida*).
 3. For further details on this point, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations," and Corinne Lefèvre, "The *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī* (1608–11): Dialogue and Asiatic Otherness at the Mughal Court," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, nos. 2–3 (2012). (*Cultural Dialogue in South Asia and Beyond: Narratives, Images and Community [Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries]*, ed. C. Lefèvre and I. G. Zupanov), 255–86.
 4. See Corinne Lefèvre, "Le livre en acte à la cour moghole. Le cas des littératures historique et religieuse d'après le *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī* (1608–11)," *Eurasian Studies* 12 (2014), (*Scribes and Readers in Iranian, Indian and Central Asian Manuscript Traditions*, ed. N. Balbir and M. Szuppe), 297–324, for an analysis of the discussions bearing on historical and religious literature; Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations," 488; and Sunil Sharma, "Reading the Acts and Lives of Performers in Mughal Persian Texts," in *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*, ed. F. Orsini and K. Butler Schofield (Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2015), 283–302, for brief forays into the poetic debates and performances recorded in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*.
 5. For a discussion of the ancient background of this institution, see Samer M. Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages. Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 13–32.
 6. Ewald Wagner, "Munazara," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs, and C. Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 7, 565. For a detailed analysis of the impact of *adab* principles on artistic speech in assembly, see Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons*, 33–74.
 7. 'Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 1–2, 113–14.
 8. See Amina Steinfels, "His Master's Voice: The Genre of *Malfuzat* in South Asian Sufism." *History of Religions* 44, no. 1 (2004): 56–69; and Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate 1192–1286* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), 373–76, for the development of the genre of *malfuzat* in South Asia. For an English translation of the *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, see Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, trans. B. B. Lawrence, *Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam ad-din Awliya recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

9. The overwhelming importance of the figure of the *padshah* (emperor) in the religious ideology elaborated by the Mughals in the second half of the sixteenth century translated into the development of a master-to-disciple relationship with the elite of the kingdom.
10. From this perspective, the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* stand in stark contrast with the *Jahangir Nama*—Jahangir's autobiography-cum-official chronicle—in which the king's spiritual pretensions are only alluded to.
11. On the Mughals' appropriation of the ideology of sacred kingship and the messianic overtones it was given during the decades surrounding the Islamic millennium (1591–1592), see A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
12. 'Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 26–27, 58, 110–11.
13. See, for example, 'Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 93–94.
14. See, for example, Carl W. Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages." *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 179; and Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations," 463. As is well known, Mughals descended from the great Mongol conqueror Chingiz Khan (d. 1227) on the maternal side. For a collection of articles on interconfessional debates involving Muslims in medieval times (including those held at the thirteenth-century court of the Mongol khan Mongke), see Hava Lazarus-Yafeh et al., ed., *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1999).
15. On the Jesuits, see Edward Douglas MacLagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (London: Burn Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1932); and Arnulf Camps, *Jerome Xavier, S. J. and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire: Controversial and Missionary Activities* (Schoneck-Beckenried, Switzerland: Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire, 1957), for a conventional treatment of their dealings at the Mughal court, and Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations," for a recent reassessment; on Bada'uni, *Muntakhab al-tavarikh*, see the new lines of inquiry opened by Ali Anooshahr, "Mughal Historians and the Memory of the Islamic Conquest of India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 3 (2006): 275–300; and Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, esp. 152–61; for Sanskrit insights into Mughal interconfessional disputations, see Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
16. For an in-depth analysis of the debates with the Jesuits, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations."
17. Jahangir's Islamic disputations primarily focus on the sources of the shari'a (Qur'an and hadith) and on the latter's provisions on a wide variety of issues (diet, marriage and divorce, conquest, music and singing, funeral rites, henna dye). See Reyaz Ahmad Khan, "Jahangir and Muslim Theology-Discussions Reported in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 71st Session* (Calcutta: Indian History Congress, 2011), 236–42; and Reyaz Ahmad Khan, "Jahangir on Shi'as and Sunnis in *Majalis-i Jahangiri*," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 72nd Session* (Aligarh: Aligarh Historian Society, 2012), 302–7; as well as Shireen Moosvi, "The Conversations of Jahangir 1608–11: Table Talk on Religion," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 68th Session* (Delhi: Indian History Congress, 2008), 328–32, for brief

- descriptions of some of these exchanges; Kollatz, *Inspiration und Tradition*, 216–78, as well as Corinne Lefèvre, “Beyond Diversity: Mughal Legal Ideology and Politics,” in *Law Addressing Diversity. Pre-Modern Europe and India in Comparison (13th to 18th Centuries)*, ed. T. Ertl and G. Kruijtzter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 116–41, and Corinne Lefèvre, “Messianism, Rationalism and Inter-Asian Connections: The *Majalis-i Jahangiri* (1608–11) and the Socio-Intellectual History of the Mughal ‘Ulama,’” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 54, no. 3 (2017): 317–38, for further insight.
18. Besides the extracts translated below, see ‘Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 64–65, and Lefèvre, “Beyond Diversity,” for an analysis thereof. Except from a brief and derogatory mention (p. 72), it is worth stressing that Hindu religious traditions are not addressed in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* as a set of metaphysical beliefs.
 19. ‘Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 265–66, 268. Although mentioned in the Qur’an, the *Suhuf-i Ibrahim* are generally considered a lost body of scripture. One is therefore left to wonder what text was actually translated at the Mughal court, even though the nature of the subjects debated would point in the direction of the Torah (mentioned as such in the text p. 118 as *taurit*). For further details on the Jewish presence at the Mughal court, see Walter J. Fischel, “Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18 (1948–1949): 137–77.
 20. ‘Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 3–4.
 21. Akbar’s self-promotion to the status of *mujtahid* may be dated to 1579 and the promulgation of the famous *mahzar*—a declaration signed by the principal ‘ulama’ of the empire and endowing the monarch with a juridical-religious authority surpassing (at least theoretically) that of his Safavid and Ottoman competitors. For further details, see Francis W. Buckler, “A New Interpretation of Akbar’s ‘Infallibility’ Decree of 1579,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, New Series* 56, no. 4 (1924): 591–608; and Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, chap. 5.
 22. ‘Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 247.
 23. I want to express my warmest thanks to Ali Anooshahr who was kind enough to check the original draft of my translation and helped me improve it. All mistakes remain, of course, mine alone.
 24. As noted by Alam and Subrahmanyam, “Frank Disputations,” 494, he was probably the Jesuit José de Castro (d. 1646) who arrived in Agra in 1610 as part of the third mission at the Mughal court.
 25. Having served Jahangir from his days as a prince, Mahabat Khan (d. 1634) became a leading amir of his reign. For a detailed account of his life and career, see Samsam al-Daula Aurangabadi Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma’asir al-umara’*, trans. H. Beveridge and B. Prasad, 2 vols. (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911–1952). 2, 9–28.
 26. *Qibla* is the direction of the Ka’ba in Mecca, which has to be faced during prayers.
 27. A member of the Lodi tribe, Khan Jahan (d. 1631) had a meteoric rise at the beginning of the reign of Jahangir who made him a symbol of his new pro-Afghan policy. For a detailed account of his life and career, see Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma’asir al-umara’*, vol. 1, 795–804.

28. A Dhivarat Kachhwaha Rajput, Ram Das (d. 1613) entered Mughal service under Akbar and was subsequently substantially promoted by Jahangir at the expense of the Rajavat branch of the Kachhwahas.
29. He is very probably identical to Pathan Mishra Jajipuri, one of the two Sanskrit pandits who assisted Nizam al-Din Panipati in the Persian rendition of the *Yogavashista*, which he presented to Jahangir (then still known as prince Salim) in 1597.
30. I am very grateful to Audrey Truschke for her help in identifying these two mythical figures. The story narrated by Pathan Mishra constitutes a late version of the legendary battle between Indra, king of the gods, and the demon brothers Vṛtra and Bala, which originally appeared in the Vedas and was subsequently retold in a number of Sanskrit texts, including the *Mahabharata* and some Puranas.
31. I.e. Dadhica, the well-known ascetic of the *Mahabharata*.
32. For a brief account of Khan A'zam's (d. 1624) life and career under Akbar and Jahangir, see Corinne Lefèvre, "Azīz Koka, Mirzā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, and E. Rowson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), fasc. 5, part 2, 151–52.
33. Reference here is to the sixth verse of the sura 109 known as "The Unbelievers" (*al-Kafirun*): dating from the first Meccan period, the sura "is said to have been revealed in response to a proposal made by the Meccan polytheists to simultaneously or alternatively worship Allah and the idols." Régis Blachère, *Le Coran: Traduction selon un essai de reclassement des sourates* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1947–1950), vol. 2, 125. In this respect, sura 109 contrasts with later suras of the Medinan (post-Hegira) period, some of them advocating a more aggressive attitude vis-à-vis non-Muslims.
34. The *mir 'adl* was an official who assisted the emperor or governors in dispensing justice.
35. Besides his office of *mir 'adl*, Sayyid Ahmad Qadiri (d. 1629–30) was in charge of introducing the would-be disciples to Jahangir and was therefore a central figure of the imperial cult during his reign: see Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Jahangir Nama*, trans. W. M. Thackston (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution & Oxford University Press, 1999), 53, where his name is given as Shaykh Ahmad Lahauri.
36. Ruzbih Shirazi's career is very poorly documented. Apart from his interventions recorded in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, he is credited by a mid-seventeenth century biographical dictionary with the composition of an astronomical work (*Kitab-i zij*) together with the better-known Mulla Muhammad of Thatta. Shaikh Farid ibn Ma'ruf Bhakkari, *Zakhirat al-khawanin*, ed. S. M. Haq (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961–1974), vol. 2, 373.
37. At the time of the composition of the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, Shukrallah Shirazi (d. 1639) was an Iranian newcomer to the Mughal court, even though he had previously enjoyed the patronage of the amir 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan in Burhanpur. For further details on his life and career (he was later to become one of Shah Jahan's most influential prime ministers under the title of Afzal Khan), see Rajeev Kinra, "The Learned Ideal of the Mughal Wazir: The Life and Intellectual World of Prime Minister Afzal Khan Shirazi (d. 1639)," in *Secretaries and Statecraft in the Early Modern World*, ed. P. M. Dover (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 177–205.

38. Although it is commonly known as the “stoning verse” (*ayat al-rajm*) and believed by some jurists to have once been part of the sura *al-ahzab* before it was removed from the final version of the Qur’an, it is actually—as Maulana Ruzbih rightly pointed out in his answer to Jahangir—part of the hadith corpus. For further details, see ‘Abd al-Sattar, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, 324–25, and John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 127–35.
39. ‘Abd al-Qadir Bada’uni, *Muntakhab al-tavarikh*, trans. G. S. A. Ranking, W. H. Lowe, and T. W. Haig (Reprint, Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1986), vol. 2, 191, mentions a Qadi Shukr in charge of Mathura in the time of Akbar. Pending further information and research, it is however impossible to establish whether Bada’uni’s and ‘Abd al-Sattar’s Qadi Shukr were one and the same.
40. Raja ‘Ali Khan (r. 1576–1597) was the penultimate representative of the Faruqi dynasty that had been ruling over the small sultanate of Khandesh (northwest Deccan) since the late fourteenth century.
41. In 1586, Khan A’zam led the first of several Mughal expeditions against Khandesh, which was eventually absorbed into the empire in 1601.
42. Having been instrumental in Jahangir’s accession to the throne and in the capture of the rebel prince Khusrau in 1606, Shaykh Farid Bukhari Murtaza Khan (d. 1616) became one of the greatest amirs of the empire during the first decade of the reign. For further details on his life and career, see Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma’asir al-umara’*, vol. 1, 521–27.
43. Jahangir’s eldest son, prince Khusrau, was kept under close watch from the time of his failed rebellion in 1606 until his death in 1622.
44. A minor amir of Jahangir’s reign, Diyanat Khan was known for his outspokenness—a quality abundantly illustrated in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*—that caused him to be briefly imprisoned in 1615. Jahangir, *Jahangir Nama*, 167–68.
45. In 1449, Mirza ‘Abd al-Latif (d. 1450) rebelled against his father, Mirza Ulugh Beg (d. 1449), grandson of Timur (d. 1405) and ruler of Transoxiana, and eventually had him murdered on his way to Mecca.
46. Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1234) was the author of the *‘Avarif al-ma’arif*, a well-known handbook for Sufis.

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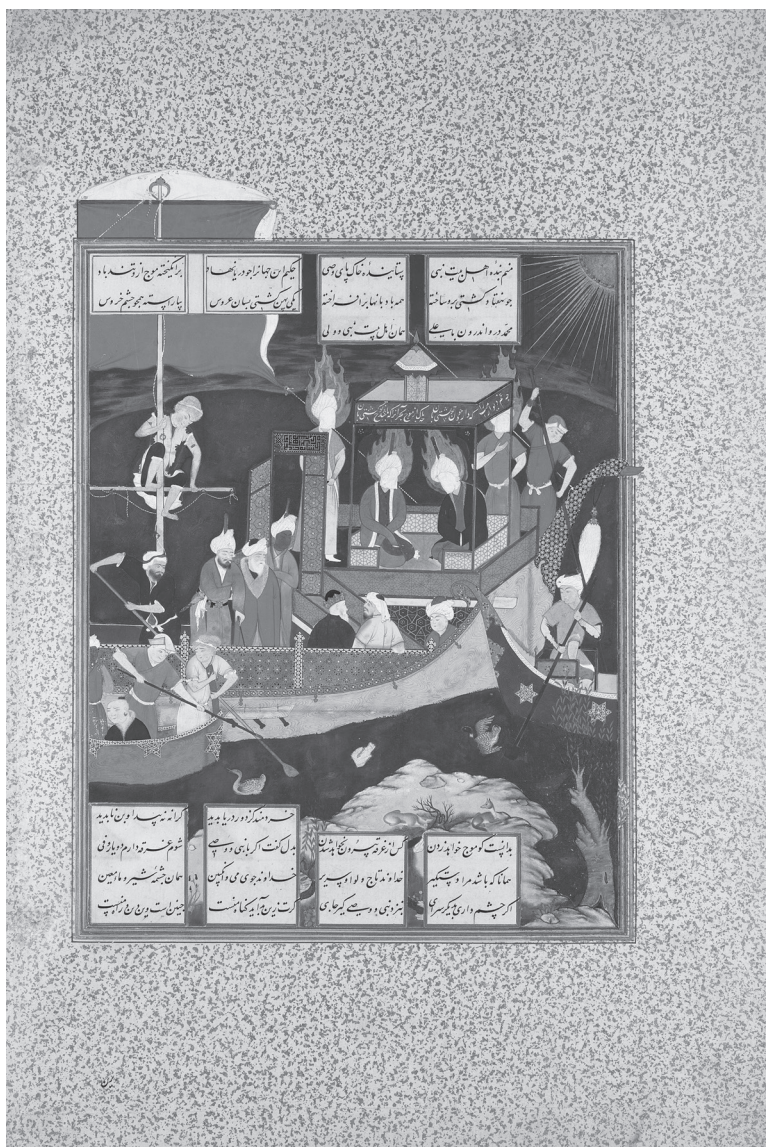


FIGURE 2.1 *Firdausi's Parable of the Ship of Shi'ism*

The image depicts the famous story of how God set humanity adrift on seventy ships of different faiths into an angry sea. Here, the Safavid miniaturist Mirza 'Ali, who was working on Shah Tahmasb's *Shahnama*, tries to suggest that the followers of the Prophet's household are those who will safely reach their destination by portraying the Prophet and his son-in-law, and cousin 'Ali (the first Shi'i imam), sitting beneath the pavilion at the high center of the scene. Hasan and Husain, the Prophet's grandchildren (through 'Ali and his daughter Fatimah), stand in the background. Fatimah, a central figure in the history of the Shi'is, however, is not depicted. Mirza 'Ali draws a close connection between the Safavids and the holy family by portraying them with the Haydari *taj* (Safavid turban).

Source: Folio 18v from the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasb

Artist: Painting attributed to Mirza 'Ali (active c. 1525–1575)

Date: c. 1530–1535

Place of origin: Tabriz, Iran

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1970.301.1

2. Heretics, Polytheists, and the Path of the Righteous

As we saw in chapter 1, the religious diversity within these empires sparked great debates, disputations, and shaped imperial policy. Added to that were the widespread intrafaith controversies between Sunni Ottoman and Shi'i Safavid theologians, who worked with their respective political establishments to sort out such fundamental issues as the legitimacy of rulers, conceptions of authority, and soteriological matters. These fundamentals of faith and society were vehemently contested, and although some issues remained in the realm of intellectual activity among members of the religious order, the differences were nevertheless exploited politically, leading to persecution, mass violence, and costly wars between the two empires. In the second essay in this chapter, Abdurrahman Atçıl examines a set of Ottoman fatwas issued by the empire's highest-ranking jurist, the shaykh al-Islam Ebussuud Efendi, against the Safavids at the height of conflict between the two empires during the sixteenth century. A pressing religio-legal concern was the permissibility of waging war against fellow Muslims; also, the validity of charges of heresy, apostasy, and religious innovation (*bid'a*) levied against them and their supporters needed to be resolved.

In addition to the issue of adherence to “true faith” between Sunni and Shi'i literate communities, a contentious epistemological subject was at the center of learning—the ceaseless search for certitude, an unresolved problem that the early modern thinkers had inherited from the classical period, particularly in the realm of jurisprudence. In the first essay, Maryam Moazzen discusses the life and work of a prominent Shi'i intellectual in Safavid Iran, Mulla Muhsin Fayz Kashani,

who was a harsh critic of jurists who sometimes privileged independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) over the Qur'an and hadith, which he, like many in his camp, believed to carry absolute certitude (*yaqin*). He further antagonized the *mujtahids* by questioning their methodology of arriving at a legal ruling. In his *The Right Path* (*Rah-i Sawab*), part of which is examined and translated below, Fayz attempted to clarify some of the fundamental issues facing the Muslim world of his time, such as the existence of deep divisions among the Muslim communities even though they are given the true Prophet and shown the right path to salvation, and how to view the presence of discrepancies between the Qur'an and hadith.

In the third essay, Audrey Truschke adds to Corinne Lefèvre's study in chapter 1 of the tenuous relationship between the Mughal court and its non-Muslim subjects through examination of a unique Sanskrit source penned by the famed Jain monk Siddhicandra. The monk was asked by Emperor Jahangir to justify his renunciation of all material comfort, sex, and marriage at the height of his youth—a practice not widely accepted in Islam. Jahangir, not convinced by the monk's reasoning, ordered him to abandon his decision, and when he refused, the emperor banished him as well as other Jain communities from the empire. Fortunately, the decree was short lived, and Jahangir annulled it shortly thereafter. This episode demonstrates the declining status of once influential Jain monks at the Mughal court. Nevertheless, as Truschke explains, Siddhicandra's debate with the powerful emperor, and its recording for later generations, provided a platform for defending the virtues of Jain ascetic practices. Even more important was that the defense was articulated by Siddhicandra, a counterweight against the internal criticism directed at Jain monks who chose to remain close to the Mughal court, the center of worldly corruption.

I. The Shi‘a Path of the Righteous

THE STRENGTH OF AKHBARISM IN SAFAVID IRAN

MARYAM MOAZZEN

The writings of Muhammad b. Murtaza b. Mahmud Kashani, better known as Muhsin Fayz (d. 1680), offer a vivid picture of the religious atmosphere of Safavid Iran. Born into a scholarly family, Fayz was destined to become a keen observer of intellectual and religious conditions in the second half of the seventeenth century. He received a comprehensive education in his hometown of Kashan, and then he mastered both the rational and traditional sciences during his studies in Isfahan, Shiraz, Hijaz, and Qum. In his autobiography, *Risala-yi Sharh-i Sadr*, he describes his formative years as follows:

I started my education in my hometown of Kashan, learning formal and exoteric religious sciences including Qur’anic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence, the principles of the religion, and auxiliary sciences in the teaching circle of my uncle. . . . At age twenty I left Kashan for Isfahan and took part in the teaching circles of a number of scholars, but because I was in search of esoteric knowledge (*‘ilm-i batini*), nobody in Isfahan could teach me such knowledge. While in Isfahan I learned some mathematics and the like. Finally, I left for Shiraz in search of Prophetic traditions and there became a student of the *mujtahid* (jurist-consult) of the age, that is, Sayyid Majid b. Hashim Sadiqi Bahrani, an expert in exoteric sciences who taught me the knowledge of what is permitted and what is forbidden and other legal issues.

Finally, Bahrani issued me an *ijaza* (license to transmit hadith). Then, I went back to Isfahan and joined the teaching circle of Shaykh Baha’ al-Din Muhammad ‘Amili, who also issued me an *ijaza* to transmit hadith. Afterward, I left for Hijaz; during the pilgrimage I met Shaykh Muhammad b. Hasan b. Zayn al-Din al-‘Amili who also issued me an *ijaza* to

transmit hadith. On the way back home bandits killed my brother. . . . In spite of this event, I continued to visit various places in search of knowledge and perfection (*kamal*), seeking out the teaching circle of every scholar who had any spiritual knowledge. Finally, I went to Qum and became a student of Mulla Sadra,¹ the foremost Sufi of the age and the moon in the sky of certitude. Sadr al-Din (i.e., Mulla Sadra) was the leading scholar in spiritual sciences. In the course of the eight years I was his student, I was busy with disciplining and training my soul, which resulted in my attaining insight into spiritual sciences.”²

When Mulla Sadra (d. 1640) left Qum for Shiraz, Fayz accompanied his teacher and attended his teaching circle for two more years. Finally, he returned to his hometown of Kashan, where he occupied himself exclusively with studying and teaching. The only interruptions to his work were the occasions when he was summoned to Isfahan by Shah Safi (d. 1642) and later by Shah ‘Abbas II (d. 1666) to lead the Friday prayer.³

In his books and short treatises, Fayz examined a wide range of topics from Islamic theology and jurisprudence to theosophy. Yet his main contribution is to the field of prophetic and imami hadith (sayings and deeds of the Prophet and the imams). His *al-Wafī* is a ratification of the four Shi‘i books of hadith (*al-Kaḥī*, *Man la Yahdur al-Faqih*, *Tahzib*, and *Istibṣar*). In several of his treatises, including *Sharh-i Sadr* (written in 1655), *Haqq al-Mubin*, *Raf‘ al-fitna*, *Zad al-Salik*, *Rah-i Savab*, *al-I’tidhar* (written in 1666), and *al-Insaf* (1672), Fayz criticized both the *mutakallims* (speculative theologians) and *mujtahids* (jurisconsults) alike. However, he reserved his harshest criticism for the *mujtahids* who favor speculation (*zann*) over the definitive knowledge (*qat’*) offered by the Qur’an and the prophetic and imami traditions. This criticism is rooted in Fayz’s epistemological principle that there is absolute certitude (*yaqin*) in the traditions of the Prophet and the Shi‘i imams. He maintained that canonical hadith literature should be viewed primarily as soteriology. Moreover, he blamed the *mujtahids* for causing widespread *ikhtilaf* (differences of opinion) amongst themselves and sowing division in the Shi‘i community.

Although the divergent opinions of jurists can be seen as representing intellectual creativity, legal disputes were undeniably divisive. The plurality of opinion among *mujtahids* did not resonate well with the perceived ecumenical nature of the religious discourse advocated by Fayz. In addition to critiquing the *mujtahids*’ differences of opinion, Fayz criticized their scholarly methods. He was well aware of the impossibility of achieving consensus among the *mujtahids*, who develop religious rulings based on probable evidence, in particular their personal opinions (*ra’y*), and use of *qiyas* (analogy), which he regarded as inferential. Fayz insisted that epistemic certainty, which is crucial for securing the Shi‘i faith and for maintaining unity in the community, cannot be attained by means of scholarly tools other than the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet and the imams.⁴ For this reason, he praised such hadith transmitters as al-Kulayni,⁵ Ibn Babuya (Shaykh Saduq),⁶ and Razi al-Din ‘Ali b. Tawus al-Hilli,⁷ who, according to Fayz, made religious rulings only based on the Qur’an and the traditions of the imams. He claimed that their works are reliable and

their words will never die “because their discourse is the word of God and His messenger which will not change until the day of the resurrection. These hadith scholars did not write about theology and *usul al-fiqh* (sources of jurisprudence) unless they wanted to refute the opinions of the *mutakallims* and *mujtahids*.”⁸ Conversely, mujtahids generally argued that a qualified scholar could apply his individual reasoning to *usul al-fiqh* and develop religious rulings to address the increasingly diverse aspects of social life that were not clearly addressed in the Qur'an or hadiths.

In addition, Fayz followed the path of his mentor and father-in-law, Mulla Sadra, who harmonized scripture, theosophy, and philosophy in his unique reinterpretation of the Islamic scriptures. Mulla Sadra proposed a type of transcendent philosophy different from other intellectual and spiritual currents and gave *hikmat* (Islamic theosophy)—which he identified with the traditions of the Prophet and the imams—a lofty status. In his scholarship, Fayz emphasized that the *hikmat* he advocated is the inheritance of the prophets and not what was taught in his time. He argued that, similar to Islamic jurisprudence, the so-called theologians and philosophers have contaminated Islamic theology and philosophy.

The ancient *hakims* were virtuous people who curbed their desires and had expert knowledge of the truth and of gnosis. Although their words are mysterious and one cannot fathom their meanings from the words (*alfaz*) alone through exoteric reading, their discourses free people from the traps of ignorance and deception. The wisdom of ancient scholars is the legacy of the prophets, which is different from the conventional *hikmat* current among recent scholars, for it has strayed.⁹

Fayz identified the *hikmat* taught by the followers of the prophets, especially by the family of the Prophet, with mysticism because “the science of Sufism is indeed an expression of the new and subtle points of *hikmat* and secrets of noble sciences that were uttered by the Prophet Muhammad.”¹⁰ He added that in every age there are a few real Sufis who possess this kind of wisdom, and that their rare spiritual genius usually makes them the subject of exoteric scholars' blame and criticism.¹¹

FAYZ'S CRITICS

A number of Fayz's contemporaries and later scholars rejected his ideas on the grounds of inconsistency and heresy. For example, according to Mirza 'Ali Tajalli,

Mulla Muhsin Kashi's scholarship is flawed and shallow. He changes his mind constantly. For a while he follows Ibn 'Arabi's mysticism, but he changes his stance and adopts Muhammad Ghazali's approach. For a short period of time he associates himself with Peripatetic philosophers, but soon thereafter changes his position and adopts the path of the Illuminationists (*Ishraqis*). He does not pay attention to the opposition of his fellow scholars and he carelessly records in his books whatever comes to his mind.¹²

Mulla Fazlullah Kashani (d. 1700), a relative of Fayz's, also took issue with his works. He wrote a gloss (*hashiya*) on Fayz's *Haqq al-Mubin* in which he criticized mystical notions as well as Fayz's ideas. In his *al-Nafahat al-Malakutiyya*, Yusuf Ahmad Bahrani (d. 1772) refuted and rejected Sufi ideas as well as the opinions of Mulla Sadra and Fayz alongside those of the *mujtahids*. In his *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrayn*, Bahrani argued that "some of Fayz's ideas border on disbelief."¹³ Shaykh 'Ali b. Muhammad 'Amili, (d. 1692), who wrote polemics against Sufis and philosophers, rebuked both Fayz and Muhammad Baqir Sabzavari for their mystical and philosophical inclinations.¹⁴ In one of his tracts, Shaykh 'Ali b. Muhammad attributed "some improper discourses" to Fayz, accusing him of believing in the Unity of Existence (*wahdat-i wujud*), of holding that infidels will not be punished eternally in Hell, and that even mujtahids of high rank are not guaranteed salvation, and so forth.¹⁵ Although Mulla Muhammad Tahir Qumi condemned Fayz's ideas harshly as well, animosity between the two was brief. In a symbolic act of penitence and in order to seek Fayz's forgiveness, Muhammad Tahir went from Qum to Kashan on foot to meet him.¹⁶

The "Right Path" According to Fayz

The following translation is excerpted from Fayz's *Rah-i Sawab* (*The Right Path*), in which he provides answers to twelve hypothetical questions concerning "the right path" for the believer.¹⁷ Indeed, this relatively short treatise summarizes his opinions on a number of key doctrinal points discussed in most of his other works. An abridgment of the treatise exists under the title of *Sharayit al-Iman* (*The Stipulations of Faith*).

TRANSLATION

Question 1: Given that the Muslim community believes in one God, and [follows] one prophet, and one Book [that is, the Qur'an], then why do they differ so vastly on religious issues?

Answer: If the God, the prophet, and the book of everybody were one, then there would be no disagreement. God's worshipers are the ones who are God-fearing and on the right path. They are the *ashab-i-yamn* (companions of the right hand), whose prophet is Muhammad and whose book is the perspicuous Qur'an. This verse of the Qur'an refers to them: "Those are upon [right] guidance from their Lord" (2:5). They are the *firqah-yi najiya* (the sect that has been promised salvation) whereas others are vain (*hava parast*) and intoxicated from the wine of aberration (*zalalat*). They have gone astray and are the proof (*misdaq*) of this verse: "Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire, and God has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after God? Then will you not be reminded?" (45:23).

These are the people who have divided into many sects and are the slaves of their own desires. They would go to Hell and their messengers (*rusul*) are the devils of both humans and jinns, as mentioned in the Qur'an: "And thus We have made for every prophet an enemy—devils from mankind and jinn, inspiring in one another decorative speech in delusion. But if your Lord had willed, they would not have done it, so leave them and that which they invent" (6:112). And, "... indeed, they are saying an objectionable statement and a falsehood" (58:2).

Question 2: What was the first disobedience that the strayed people exhibited toward God and the Prophet?

Answer: The first [act of] disobedience came about when Muhammad in his death bed ordered [his companions] to bring him a sheet and a pen and ink "to protect you and resolve the issue by writing you a letter so that you follow and there won't be any disagreement after my death." They said: "the man is delirious and talks nonsense." They said: "the Qur'an suffices us!" His Excellency [Prophet Muhammad] also repeatedly said: "O people! Verily, I am leaving behind two precious things (*thaqalayn*) among you—if you follow them you will never go astray. These two are: the Book of God and my family members (*ahl al-bayt*)."¹⁸ He also said: "My *ahl al-bayt* is like the ark of Noah; whoever boards this ship remains safe and whoever refuses [boarding] it will get drowned."¹⁸ Afterward, those people left the prophet's family and preferred others to them and abandoned the Book of God and fabricated heresies based on their whims and desires.

Question 3: Why are there so many differences in opinion among those who follow the Qur'an and the family of the Prophet, who have acknowledged the leadership of the imams and disavowed their enemies? To the extent that Shaykh Qutb al-Din Rawandi composed a book about the disputations between Shaykh Mufid¹⁹ and Shaykh Murtaza,²⁰ May God have mercy on them—they who were the leading figures among the Shi'a and the greatest scholars of their time. In his book, Rawandi mentions ninety-five issues related to the principles (*usul*) of religion, concerning which the aforesaid scholars had different points of view. He says: "if I wanted to include all their disagreements, the book would have become very lengthy. Here I have included their differences of opinions on the principles of religion; now imagine how they differ in the branches (*furu'*) of religion!"

Answer: The reason for this difference is that when the misguided people (that is, Sunnis) refused to follow the Book and the family of the Prophet, they developed the science of *kalam* (Islamic theology) and the art of disputation (*jadal*), which were used to refute the heretical groups and to convince the enemies of the religion. They augmented its [the science of *kalam*'s] problems to meet their own whims and wishes, assuming that they were correcting their own religious beliefs. They also devised the science of jurisprudence, which is a kind of disputation based on weak speculations (*zunun-i wahiyya*) and in which it is hardly possible to reach an agreement. They invented this science to deduce religious rulings at a time

when the Shi'a were in a state of precautionary dissimulation (*taqiya*) and did not feel safe. They were associating with misguided people and were hearing their false statements presented as truth. As some scholars have stated, they were studying their [Sunni scholars'] books when they were young, and thus became accustomed to them. This is because at that time those books were taught in madrasas, mosques, and other learning centers, and because rulers were Sunnis and people follow the religion of their leaders. As it is commonly said: "people follow the religion of their kings." This situation continued for a while, as a result of which there came about a total misunderstanding concerning Sunni and Shi'i belief. Principles and knowledge got mixed with ignorance. Scholars started discussing and arguing issues that neither God nor the Prophet had addressed and [in fact] had remained silent about them, as a result of which so many differences of opinion came about. They abandoned the approach of the early scholars who were satisfied merely to listen to the infallible imams on everything related to the principles (*usul*) and branches (*furu'*). Instead, the scholars favored the approach of the stray [Sunni scholars], following their own personal opinions and whims, despite the fact that in several verses of the Qur'an, God assertively dismisses following personal opinion and surmise.²¹ Several hadiths also speak against personal opinion (*ra'y*), independent scholarly reasoning (*ijtihad*), and rulings (*fatwa*) on a matter of Islamic law given by a recognized authority except when they are based on sayings and deeds of the infallibles (that is, the Prophet and the Shi'i imams) that has been prescribed by the Qur'an as well.²² When personal opinion, and surmise as well as rationalization [in principles and branches of religion] have become the norm, as a result there are so many differences of opinion among children of Adam. Beware! Beware! The best approach is for all the community to take their religious beliefs, including the principles (*usul*) and branches (*furu'*), from the Prophet and his appointed successors, who are infallible and do not rely on their deficient intellect.²³

Question 4: On the surface, there are so many discrepancies within the Qur'an and hadith literature. There are also countless contradictory sayings both on the *usul* and *furu'* of religion by the imams. If we cast aside *kalam* (theology) and sources of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), how can we bring compatibility and harmony among them?

Answer: There is no difference of opinion about the clear and fixed verses of the Qur'an (*muhkamāt*), and the imams who are the most knowledgeable (*rasikhan*) and infallible have explained the hidden meanings of most of the vague verses (*mutishabihat*). This [approach] follows the order of Prophet Muhammad, who said: "Write down our hadith and record them and leave them for your progeny because there will come a time that they would need them." Shi'i scholars sifted through the prophetic and imami traditions painstakingly and distinguished weak hadiths from the authentic ones for us. Hence they [the Prophet and the imams] are the authors of these hadith and *khavar*, as the book of any author belongs to him and the way to reach harmony among their various sayings has been mentioned in the

authentic hadiths that are not disputed, such as the saying quoted by 'Umar b. Hanzala. Whoever follows the sayings of the Prophet and the imams, he will not have a different opinion. Because the above hadith has several beneficial points, I quote it here: It has been quoted from 'Umar b. Hanzala who had asked Abu 'Abdullah (that is, Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Shi'i Imam) whether it was permissible for two of the Shi'is who had a disagreement concerning a debt or a legacy to seek the verdict of the ruler or judge. He replied: "Whoever who has recourse to the ruler or a judge, whether his case be just or unjust, has in reality recourse to *taghut* (that is, the illegitimate ruling power). Whatever he obtains as a result of his verdict, he will have obtained by forbidden means, even if he has a proven right to it, for he will have obtained it through the judgment of the *taghut*, that power that God Almighty has commanded him to disbelieve in." God said, "Have you not seen those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you? They wish to seek justice from *taghut*, while they were commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray" (4:60).

Then, I asked: "So how are they to act?" He said: "They look to someone from you, who narrates our traditions, and is well-versed in our permitted (*halal*) and our forbidden (*haram*), and is well-acquainted with our ordinances. So, they are to accept him as judge and arbiter, for verily I have made him a ruler (*hakim*) over you. Thus, if he rules by our ruling and it is not accepted from him, then only the ruling of God has been belittled and we have been rejected. And the rejecter of us is the rejecter of God, and such person is close to [committing the sin of] associating [a partner] with God (*shirk*)."

Then, I asked: "[what happens] if each of the men [litigants] agreed on two arbiters from our community and they both would agree to look into their case but they would differ in their judgment and would differ over [the transmission or interpretation] of your tradition?" The imam said: "the ruling of the one who is more righteous (*adil*), more learned, more truthful in relating our tradition, and more pious shall prevail. And no attention shall be paid to the decision of the other." I asked: "[what] if both are equally righteous and equally accepted by our associates and neither of the two is regarded more excellent?" The imam replied: "[In that case] the tradition related on our authority should be investigated. That which is agreed upon by your associates should be accepted as our ruling and that which is rare and unknown among your associates should be abandoned, for that which is agreed upon is not subject to doubt. The matters of faith are of three types."²⁴

Question 5: There are so many religious matters that have not been discussed either in the Qur'an or the hadith literature. If we dismiss theology and jurisprudence, how can we come up with answers for these issues?

Answer: The Qur'an covers all necessary matters related to creed, deeds, and ethical issues, as God in the Qur'an says: "And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record"

(6:59); “And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims” (16:89); and, “We have not neglected in the Register a thing” (6:38). The Qur’an even explains one topic in several ways. For one group of people, it explains [the topic] in a logical way and for another group it uses preaching, and for others it explains through a disputation technique. Generally, the Qur’an explains issues in accordance with people’s level of understanding and ranks. As the Qur’an says: “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided” (1:125).

The sayings of the imams provide necessary comments and interpretation for the verses of the Qur’an that need elucidation. If some of those hadiths have not reached us or we don’t understand some of their sayings, we can make analogical reasoning based on the hadith and principles that we have at our disposal. . . . In summation, the Qur’an and the family of the Prophet suffice the Muslim community, and other than these two there is no need for anything else. That is why, in the final days of his life when he was receiving the last messages of God, the Prophet chose Ali to succeed him; in the *Sura al-Ma’ida*, which is the last chapter of the Qur’an, God Says: “This day I have perfected for you and your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin—then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (5:3).

But since the misled people (that is, Sunni Muslims) chose not to follow the family of the Prophet and did not have any other resource, out of desperation they invented a number of approaches as analogy: *istihsan* (juristic preference, referring to the principle that permits exceptions to strict and/or literal legal reasoning in favor of the public interest), *ijma’* (consensus), interpretation of the unclear verses of the Qur’an in accordance with their own personal views, and other baseless approaches in which there is no possibility of agreement. Everyday a new opinion comes about. . . . They have confused the ignorant in principles and branches of religion by emphasizing that not only knowing [the aforesaid principles and methods] is necessary but also knowledge of them is the most important religious task, but there is no need to know them because they haven’t been discussed or mentioned either in the Qur’an or the hadith literature. A group of contemporary scholars have become fond of the [abovementioned] approaches and nonsenses, and have started making use of them and putting forward similar ideas.

Question 6: When the opinions of the jurists (*fuqaha*) cannot be trusted and their disagreement is against God’s will, and when deducing religious verdict based on personal opinions (*ra’y*) is not permitted in [our] religion, hence what is the point of preserving the sayings and writings of the jurisconsults (*mujtahids*)?

Answer: There are two types of mujtahids: there is a group of mujtahids such as Abu Ja’far Muhammad b. Ya’qub al-Kulayni, Abb Ja’far Muhammad b. ‘Ali

Babawayh Qumi, Sayyid Razi al-Din 'Ali b. Tawus al-Hilli, and a few among the recent scholars who rely only on the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet and the imams on all religious matters in both principles and branches, insofar as in their books they don't go beyond what is said in the *thaqalayn* [that is, the Qur'an and the imams)—May God have mercy on all of them. One can have full confidence on their work, and their opinions are always valid and relevant, because they only transmit the ever-unchanging and fixed words of God and His messenger, as it has been confirmed in a prophetic hadith: "What is permitted by Muhammad will remain permitted till the Day of Resurrection and what is forbidden by him would remain so until the Day of Resurrection." And for this reason the aforementioned scholars never authored any books on Islamic theology [*'ilm al-kalam*] and the resources of jurisprudence [*usul al-fiqh*] except to refute scholars who like to dispute and reason [in religious matters]. This is also because they always refer to the Qur'an and hadith and *khabar* literature. They have never believed that the sayings of a dead scholar are invalid and emulating a living non-mujtahid is not permitted and similar invalid views that issued forth from the misled people [the Sunni and their Shi'i imitators].

There is another group of them [mujtahids] who, at times, come up with some religious rulings (fatwas) based on the Qur'an and hadith. Sometimes their rulings are based on their own personal opinion, which they build upon several principles established by scholars of their ilk. They are overly reliant on their own intellect regarding religious verdicts. They change their views [regarding religious matters] constantly and easily and even say or write things contrary to what they said earlier. In their books, they sometimes contradict what they have said earlier or quote a different consensus about an issue, yet again in the same book or in another claim consensus about the same subject. Shaykh Zayn al-Din wrote a book about subjects on which Shaykh Abu Ja'far al-Tusi²⁵ had claimed consensus and then contradicted himself or mentioned consensus against the same topic. Zayn al-Din listed about 400 topics discussed in al-Tusi's book, not even including the disagreements of other mujtahids. Therefore, one cannot rely and depend on the sayings and writings of this group of jurisconsults; preserving their work has little value, and that is why they claim that the sayings of a dead [scholar] are like a corpse: so long as a mujtahid is alive, one cannot rely on his [ever-changing] opinion and is not permitted to emulate him, since mujtahids don't even trust their own opinions.

Question 7: What is consensus (*ijma'*) and what is an agreed upon issue (*mas'alah al-ijma'iya*)?

Answer: Consensus is of two kinds: the valid consensus and invalid consensus. The valid consensus is what all Muslims and all Shi'i sects have agreed upon with regard to a single subject, usually due to the fact that the topic is discussed in the Qur'an and hadith literature and if anybody disagrees with that subject, he or she has left the religion. For example, every Muslim agrees that consuming

intoxicating beverages is forbidden in Islam, and all Shi'i sects have agreed upon the necessity of wiping their feet (*mash*) while performing ablution.²⁶ Hence, if any Muslim maintains that drinking is permitted in Islam, then he has left the religion. Likewise, if a Shi'i believes in washing feet while performing ablution, he has indeed declared himself a non-Shi'i. This kind of consensus is also called "the necessities of religion (or faith)" and it has been proved repeatedly that this kind of consensus cannot be made against what is mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith. Indeed, these consensus are based on the Qur'anic verses and prophetic hadith. This is because an *umma* cannot devise an issue (a consensus) unless it is mentioned in the Qur'an, let alone fabricate something against the teachings of the Qur'an [and agree upon it].

Their Excellencies, the imams, said: "Whenever you come across a saying ascribed to us, check it against the Qur'an and the prophetic hadith; if it is in accordance with them, then accept that *khavar* [as authentic], otherwise reject it." Therefore, considering that even the sayings of the imams must be rejected if they are against the Qur'an and prophetic tradition, consensus of scholars [if they are against the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith] most definitely must be rejected.

The invalid consensus occurs when one person or more people from the Muslim community or the Shi'i sect choose a school of thought (*madhhab*) and then seek the agreement of people through deception or falsehood, or based on surmise or approximation, and if somebody were to carry out an investigation he would find a contradiction against [that school of thought] either in Islam or Shi'ism. For example, the consensus that the Sunni claimed over Abu Bakr's caliphate was based on deception and falsehood, and there was no proof for it in either the Qur'an or the tradition of the Prophet. Rather, it was against the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet, and the best of the companions such as his (the Prophet's) family members as well as Salman-i Farsi, Miqdad b. Aswad, Abu Darr Ghifari, 'Ammar b. Yasir, Hudhayfah b. Yaman, and so forth, expressed their disagreement [with this consensus] clearly and unequivocally.

Likewise, the consensus of the Twelver-Shi'a on the obligatory observance of the Friday prayer on the condition of the presence of an infallible imam has been discussed by some of the contemporary scholars. Their rationalization is based on surmise and guessing, despite the fact it is against what is being said in the Qur'an and the *sunna* and the clear wordings of the imams, as well as many Shi'i scholars, especially the best of them, who have argued against it. Many of these scholars were living closer to the time of the imam and therefore their knowledge of the religious matters is more accurate. In addition, this consensus is not a *mutawatir* (a tradition or consensus that has been reported by numerous transmitters in each degree of its transmission to such an extent that it would be absurd to suppose that all these transmitters concurred to narrate a falsehood) and is instead a kind of consensus that is only based on one single *khavar* and is therefore not a consensus.

Question 8: If a consensus is substantiated based on the Qur'an or hadith and that reference is a proof [*hujjat*], then what is the point of a consensus and what is the use for it? And if it doesn't have any proof, then why is it a *hujjat*? Who devised this [system] and why did he do that?

Answer: A valid consensus has a proof [that can be found in the Qur'an or hadith], as we explained earlier. The benefit of it is as follows: if there are two hadith discussing the same issue and one confirms the consensus and the other one contradicts the consensus, and the narrator of each hadith possesses the same characteristics of justice, scholarly care, and knowledge, then he [the scholar] prefers the confirming hadith over the contradicting one. The invalid consensus is invalid on principle: if it does have a proof, then that proof is a *hujjat*, and if it doesn't [have a proof], then it cannot be a *hujjat*.

The first group of people who came up with this kind of consensus were the people who assembled in the Bani Sa'ida pavilion due to corrupt objectives and desires to agree upon Abu Bakr's caliphate. They called that assembly of the hypocrite "consensus" and made it their *hujjat* based on falsehood. That consensus became the foundation and the paradigm of all other falsehoods among them (the Sunni). Whoever afterward wanted to make a falsehood prevalent among people with a goal in mind, and could not find a *hujjat* in the Qur'an or hadith, would rely on consensus.

Question 9: How can one recognize the guided virtuous people and what is the sign of the strayed? Is there any criterion based on which one can distinguish between the sect promising salvation and the sect that is doomed?

Answer: Yes. For each of the sects there are signs and characteristics that distinguish them from each other. As for the guided virtuous people, their sign is that their scholars' words and deeds are one most of the time. They also pay close attention to strengthening their certitude and guarding their hearts, as well as going after the esoteric sciences, knowing the path to the hereafter and how to get there, and discussing corrupt actions and what disturbs the heart. They are not after good meals, fine clothes, and extravagant houses and furniture. They prefer a plain life over a luxurious lifestyle. They are always subdued, humble, and pleasant. They disregard the world and are also wary of rulers. They are not keen in giving fatwas except on rare occasions; even then, they would do their best to give that ruling based on the Qur'an and hadith. If there are issues not discussed in either the Qur'an or hadith, they take every step and give a ruling with utmost caution, while replying from their purified hearts and not [replicating] what earlier scholars have said. They are always against innovations, even though everybody seems to be in agreement with them. In summation, their behavior resembles the tradition of the Prophet and the imams . . . the sign of the average guided people is that they follow their scholars in both their deeds and morals, fashion themselves after [the example of] their scholars, learn about their religious issues from them, show affection toward them, and serve them. They will be resurrected together in the Day of

Judgment, as it has been said in the hadith: “A man will resurrect with whom he likes the most.”

And the sign of the strayed is the opposite of the above: their scholars say something but act differently, and they spend most of their time attaining the kind of sciences that are useful in this world. This [behavior] leads to amassing wealth and proximity to the kings. They are always after improving their lives by wanting delicious food, fine clothing, houses, and furniture. They are in love with debate and disputation, and are conceited and arrogant.

Question 10: Only a small group of people have the sign of the guided virtuous people; therefore, are there only a very few of these people?

Answer: Yes, that is the case. Don't you see that God says: “. . . And few of My servants are grateful” (43:13). In other verses God says: “. . . and few are they . . .” (38:24), “. . . but most of them do not understand” (29:63). In addition, in the following verses God articulates the same idea: 31:25; 48:10; 12:103; 6:116; and 12:106. He also says: “And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless” (7:179). Imam Muhammad Baqir has said three times that the majority of people are like animals, but a few of the faithful [are true human beings]. And he said three times: the faithful are truly a rare breed. Hamran b. A'yan reports: “I asked his Excellency, what we should do? If all of us get together, we [are so few in number that we] cannot even finish eating a whole lamb.” His Excellency inquired: “Can I say something even more surprising than this?” Then he said: “All of the helpers (*ansar*) and the immigrants (*muhajirun*) went astray except for three people who remained on the right path! And then did I say what happened to 'Ammar after that? He said 'Ammar made allegiance (*bay'at*), then he got martyred. . . . And the three people that he was referring to are: Salman, Abu Darr, and Miqdad.”

Question 11: If only this small group can be considered as faithful, then can we describe other people as infidels?

Answer: This small group of people has the most complete faith, and there are degrees in faith. In contrast to any level of faith, there is a level of disbelief. Therefore, whoever is aware of all the degrees of faithfulness and disbelief, and has a deep knowledge of all these levels, can then describe a person according to his level of disbelief . . . the fact is that nobody can be described as an absolute infidel unless he doesn't have any degree of faithfulness. Likewise, only one can be described as a person of absolute faith who does not have a degree of disbelief in him. He can also be described as tested faithful, pious and a Shi'a par excellence. The general population of the Shi'a are the ones who can be described as the untested faithful.

Question 12: What is the definition of perfect faith, and what are the levels of faith and disbelief?

Answer: Faith is the full acceptance of, and submission to, God, both in heart and in speech without any meddling of temperament and impulsiveness. It should be based on knowledge and insight regarding all that is permitted and forbidden. Therefore, full faith has five stipulations; each condition leads to a degree in faith, and the lack of each condition leads to one kind of disbelief.

The Stipulations of Faith and Disbelief

1. Accepting and submitting to [the Will of] God Most High is the first degree in faith. Its opposite in terms of disbelief is described as denial and refusal (*juhud*), which means not submitting to the will of God either out of pride or arrogance. According to the Qur'an, when Satan was asked to prostrate before Adam, he "refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers" (2:34). Because they emulated the forefathers and predecessors like most of the infidels, when they were asked to follow the prophet that was sent down to them by God, they said "we follow the path of our forefathers as it is mentioned in the Qur'an": and "when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has revealed,' they say, 'Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.' Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided" (2:170). The Qur'an is replete with verses on this topic. So whoever denies a truth out of self-adulation and arrogance, he possesses a degree of and a kind of disbelief.

2. [The second condition] is that the acceptance and submission must be only for God's sake and not to safeguard life, wealth, health, and fear of blame. This means one should convert wholeheartedly and not just by word or by deed. This is the second degree of faith, and its opposite degree in terms of disbelief is hypocrisy: when one submits only by tongue and organs due to one of the aforesaid objectives and not out of true belief. The Arabs said "we have converted to Islam," and then God told them to confess that they had submitted, but God knew that there was no faith in their hearts: "The Bedouins say, 'We have believed.' Say, 'You have not [yet] believed'; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey God and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful" (49:14). This verse means that although one performs prayer and fasts, it is not because he believes in God but rather because he has other goals in mind. Whoever performs a pious act to gain something in this world has a degree of hypocrisy. Many of the companions of the Prophet displayed this kind of disbelief. As God Says: "And of the people are some who say, 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day,' but they are not believers." and "Indeed, God is over all things competent" (2:8, 2:20).

3. [The third condition] occurs when temperament and worldly desire cannot prevent one from accepting and submitting [to the Will of God] in speech, nor prevent one from confessing openly his conversion and submission. This means

that after one has accepted God and His will in his heart, he also confesses [his belief] aloud. This is the third degree of faith. The degree of disbelief corresponding to this level of faith involves denial, refusal out of jealousy, pride, conformism, and arrogance. So whatever is in accordance with his wish and his will, or whatever is in agreement with what he has learned from his teachers and masters, he believes and submits, whereas whatever is against his wish and learning he would not accept. This is the description of the Jews, who said: our belief is what we have heard from our teachers and masters, as God says: “Indeed, those who disbelieve in God and His messengers and wish to discriminate between God and His messengers and say, ‘We believe in some and disbelieve in others,’ and wish to adopt a way in between—Those are the disbelievers, truly. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment” (4:150–51). Elsewhere God also says: “So do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? Then what is the recompense for those who do that among you except disgrace in worldly life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be sent back to the severest of punishment” (2:85).

4. The fourth condition: This is conversion and submission based on knowledge and insight, and not misunderstanding. This is the fourth level in faith and its corresponding level in terms of disbelief is going astray: that is, studying the word of God and the traditions of the Prophet, misunderstanding their meanings, keeping this misunderstanding, and spreading this ignorance amongst people. If a knowledgeable and insightful person who has learned the meaning of the Qur’an from the Qur’an, and the meaning of the hadith from the hadith, expresses the correct meaning of the Qur’an and hadith, then that misunderstanding prevents the person from learning the right meaning and veils the correct meaning. Most Muslims suffer from this kind of disbelief. And God most high does not grant everybody the right understanding, and one cannot acquire this correct understanding by means of frequent studying and repetition. As God says: “He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of understanding” (2:269).

5. The fifth condition: This occurs after submitting to the will of God, according to the aforesaid stipulations, performing all those that are permitted and avoiding the forbidden ones. It is the fifth condition of faith; and its opposite level in disbelief is described as transgression and disobedience. Disbelief in this condition is only figurative. As God says: “And [due] to God from the people is a pilgrimage to the House—for whoever is able to find thereto a way. But whoever disbelieves—then indeed, God is free from need of the worlds” (3:97). Because it does not affect the truth and principle of faith and, rather, is related to perfection of faith, therefore, if somebody is bereft of this condition, he won’t be condemned to the eternal punishment of Hell. He would only enter Hell because of his disobedience. Being faithful and then disobeying God does not lead to redemption of punishment, as if nothing has happened. That is why it is said in the hadith:

“The fornicator is considered a believer while he is not actually in the act and the same is the case for a drinker and burglar.” And there is another kind of disbelief, termed “disbelief out of ignorance,” and that is the case for a society that has not heard of any prophetic mission and has no knowledge of religion and prophetic mission. . . .

A valid consensus has a proof [that can be found in the Qur'an or hadith] as we explained earlier and the benefit of it is as follows: if there are two hadith discussing the same issue and one confirms the consensus and the other one contradicts the consensus and the narrator of both hadith posses the same characteristics of justice, scholarly care, and knowledge and then he prefers the confirming hadith over the contradicting one. And the invalid consensus is invalid on principle because if it does have a proof, a proof is a *hujjat*, and if it doesn't, so it cannot be a *hujjat*.

The first group of people who came up with this kind of consensus were the people who assembled in the Bani Sa'ida pavilion due to corrupt objectives and desires to agree upon Abu Bakr's caliphate and then they called that assembly of the hypocrite consensus and made it their *hujjat* based on the falsehood and that consensus became the foundation and the paradigm of all other falsehoods among them [the Sunni] and whoever afterward wanted to make a falsehood prevalent among people with a goal in mind and could not find a *hujjat* in the Qur'an or hadith, would rely on consensus.

NOTES

1. For Mulla Sadra's philosophical outlook, see Sajjad Rizvi's essay in chapter 7 of this volume.
2. Muhsin Fayz Kashani, *Risala-yi sharh-i sadr*, in *Dah risala-yi muhaqqiq-i buzurg Fayz Kashani*, ed. Rasul Ja'ariyan (Isfahan: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i 'Ilmi wa Dini-i Imam Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, 1992), 58–64.
3. For more information on Fayz's life, see Yusuf Bahrani, *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrayn fi al-ijazat wa tarajim rijal al-hadith* (Beirut, 1986), 121–31; Khansari, *Rawdat al-jannat*, 126–30; Muhammad 'Ali Mudarris Tabrizi, *Rayhanat al-adab* (Tabriz, n. d.), 4: 368–79; Muhammad b. Sulayman Tunakabuni, *Qisas al-'ulama'* (Tehran, 1886), 126–30; William C. Chittick, “Muhsin-i Fayz-i Kashani,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 2, *Anamaka Through Atar al-Wozara* (New York: Mazda, 1987); Hamid Algar, “Fayz-E Kasani, Molla Mohsen-Mohammad,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 2, *Anamaka Through Atar al-Wozara* (New York: Mazda, 1987).
4. Muhsin Fayz Kashani, *Risala-i su'al wa jawab*, in Rasul Ja'ariyan, *Dah Risala az Fayz Kashani*, 117–18.
5. Muhammad b. Ya'qub b. Ishaq al-Kulayni Al-Razi (d. 941) is one of the most prominent Shi'i compilers of hadith, whose work, *al-Kafi* (Sufficient) is one of the Four Books (*al-kutub al-arba'a*) that constitute the main body of hadith for Twelver-Shi'ism.

6. Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Al-Husayn ibn Musa al-Qumi (d. after 991), commonly known as al-Shaykh al-Saduq or Ibn Babawayh/ Ibn Babuya, was one of the greatest Shi'a hadith compilers whose *Man la yahduruh al-faqih* (*Every Man His Own Lawyer*), is one of the Four Books of the Shi'a.
7. Sayyid Radi al-Din, 'Ali b. Musa b. Ja'far b. Tawus, known as Sayyid b. Tawus (d. 1265), is a prominent Shi'i scholar who authored more than fifty books, most of which are about supplication and pilgrimages. He had a rich library with approximately 1,500 books.
8. Fayz Kashani, *Risala-i su'al wa jawab*, 125.
9. Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Din wa siyasat dar dawra-yi safawi* (Qum: Ansariyan, 1991), 283; Fayz Kashani, *Risala-yi sharh-i sadr*, 48–49.
10. Fayz Kashani, *Risala-yi sharh-i sadr*, 53.
11. Fayz Kashani, *Risala-yi sharh-i sadr*, 52–54.
12. Cited in Ja'fariyan, *Din wa siyasat*, 273.
13. Bahrani, *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrayn*, 121.
14. 'Tunkabuni, *Qisas al-'ulama'*, 300.
15. Muhammad Baqir Khvansari, *Rawdat al-jannat fi ahwal al-'ulama' wa sadat* (Tehran: 1886), vol. 7: 10–31.
16. For more on his life and works see, Wali Quli Shamlu, *Qisas al-khaqani*, ed. Sayyid Hasan Sadat Nasiri (Tehran: Sazman-i Chap wa Intisharat-i Wizarat-i Farhang wa Irshad-i Islami, 1992), 2: 58; Muhammad Tahir Qazwini, 'Abbas-nama: *Ya sharh-i zindigani-i 22 sala-yi Shah 'Abbas Thani, 1052–1073*, ed. Ibrahim Dihqan (Arak: Intisharat Dawudi, 1950), 305–6; 'Abd al-Husayn Khatunabadi, *Waqayi' al-sinin wa al-a'wam*, ed. M. Bihbudi (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Islamiyya, 1973), 525–35; Isfahani Afandi, *Riyad al-'ulama' wa hiyyad al-fudala*, ed. Ahmad al-Husayni (Qum: Matba'at al-Khayyam, 1981), vol. 5: 80–82. Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i also criticized Muhsin Fayz and his mentor Mulla Sadra for their mystical and philosophical tendencies. See Todd Lawson, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Twelver Shi'ism: Ahmad al-Ahsa'i on Fayz Kashani (the Risalat al-'Ilmiyya)," in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. Robert Gleave (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 134.
17. There is a manuscript of this treatise at the library of the University of Tehran, no. 3149. Here I have used Qasimi's edition of this treatise, which is based on manuscript number 22460 held at the Astan-i Quds Library in Mashhad, Iran.
18. In his *Risala-yi insaf*, Muhsin Fayz expressed wonder and disappointment that "an *umma* blessed with having the best Prophet to guide them, who had left them a Book and a family (the *thaqalayn*) and who possessed the most comprehensive knowledge of the revelation, were still looking for knowledge in books written by scholars of the bygone nations (*umam al-salafa*)." Muhsin Fayz Kashani, *Risala-yi al-insaf*, in Rasul Jafariyan, *Dah risala-yi muhaqqiq-i buzurg Fayz Kashani* (Isfahan: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i 'Ilmi wa Dini-i Imam Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, 1992), 186–87.
19. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man al-'Ukbari al-Baghdadi, known as al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 1032), wrote a large number of books including *al-Amali*, *al-Irshad*, and *Ahkam al-nisa'*, and was a renowned teacher. Some of the most imminent Shi'i scholars

- including Shaykh Radi, Sharif Murtada, Shaykh al-Tusi, and al-Najashi were trained by him.
20. Abu al-Qasim 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sharif al-Murtaḍa (d. 1044) was one of the greatest Twelver Shi'i jurists and theologians of his time. He was one of the students of Shaykh al-Mufid and the elder brother of al-Sharif al-Raḍi, the compiler of *Nahj al-Balagha*.
 21. Perhaps he means verses of the Qur'an such as these: "And most of them follow not except assumption. Indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of what they do" (10:36); "And they have thereof no knowledge. They follow not except assumption, and indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all" (53:28).
 22. The bulk of his tracts (*Sharh-i sadr*, *Haqq al-mubin*, *Raf' al-fitna*, *Zad al-salik*, *Rah-i savab*, *I'tidhar*, and *al-Insaf*) are reactive and polemical objections to the mujtahids and other intellectuals. Fayz categorically rejected the pedagogical views of the mujtahids, *mutakallims*, and conventional philosophers, claiming that they had deviated from the right path of the Prophet and the imams and relied on intellectual tools that did not yield what he called epistemic certitude (*yaqin*). He believed that seeking "sure knowledge" (*qat'*) is a religious obligation for every Muslim who must first purify his soul and then acquire this knowledge from infallible sources, namely, the Qur'an, hadiths, and *akhbars* (sayings and deeds) of the Prophet and the imams.
 23. In his *Safinat al-najat*, Fayz reiterated the same notion. He writes: "When the epoch of the infallible imams came to an end . . . the Shi'a mixed with the Sunnis and became familiar with their books as youths, since these were the books that commonly taught in the madrasas, mosques, and elsewhere—for the kings and governments officials were Sunnis, and subjects always follow the lead of their kings. The Shi'a studied the religious sciences together with the Sunnis and read books on Islamic legal theories written by the Sunni scholars . . . they (that is, the Shi'a) approved some of what the Sunnis had written and disapproved some." Muhsin Fayz Kashani, *Safinat al-najat*, ed. Muhammad Rida al-Naqusani (Tehran, 1960), 9–10.
 24. Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina has translated the hadith fully in his *The Just Ruler (al-sultan al-'adil) in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imami Jurisprudence: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imami Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139–42.
 25. Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. al-Hasan (d.1066), better known as Shaykh al-Ta'ifih (the chief the Shi'a) al-Tusi, was one of the greatest Shi'i jurists and compilers of hadith. al-Tusi wrote in nearly all fields of Islamic sciences. His *Istibasar fi ma ikhtelar min al-akhbar* and *Tahdhib al-ahkam* are two of the four canonical Shi'i hadith books.
 26. The Shi'a believe one should only wipe one's feet during ablution (*wudu'*) instead of washing them, following this verse of the Qur'an: "O you who believe! When you intend your prayers, wash your faces and your hands from the elbows and wipe (by passing wet hands over) your head and your feet up to the ankles" (5:6). Sunni Muslims who practice the washing of their feet during *wudu'* argue that "your feet" in the Qur'an is linked to washing the face, whereas the Shi'a argue that "your feet" is linked to rubbing the head and, therefore, they should be wiped but not washed.

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II. Ottoman Religious Rulings Concerning the Safavids

EBUSSUUD EFENDI'S FATWAS

ABDURRAHMAN ATÇIL

The Safavid Sufi order, which originated in Ardabil in the early fourteenth century, became the nucleus for Shah Ismail's (d. 1524) political and military movement at the turn of the sixteenth century. Followers of the order from Azerbaijan, Anatolia, and northern Syria joined his movement in mass and zealously supported his religio-political aspiration. After capturing Tabriz, the capital of the Aqquyunlus in 1501, the Safavid army annexed Diyarbakır in 1507, Baghdad in 1508, and Shirvan and Khorasan in 1510. Meanwhile, several groups in Anatolia that were under Ottoman rule and directly or indirectly affiliated with the Safavids rose against the Ottoman authority.¹

Although the Ottomans decisively defeated the Safavids at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, the Safavid threat to the Ottoman authority in eastern Anatolia remained acute and had military, political, and religious dimensions. Claiming to be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632) and relying on the messianic ideas of the Shi'i tradition, Shah Ismail announced himself as the awaited God-chosen savior. These messianic assertions persisted, with minor adjustments, during Shah Tahmasb's rule (1524–1576).² The propaganda of these ideas was especially successful among Turkmen groups, many of which were under Ottoman rule in Anatolia.³ The Ottomans were rightly concerned that their legitimacy and rule in most of Anatolia might slip away.

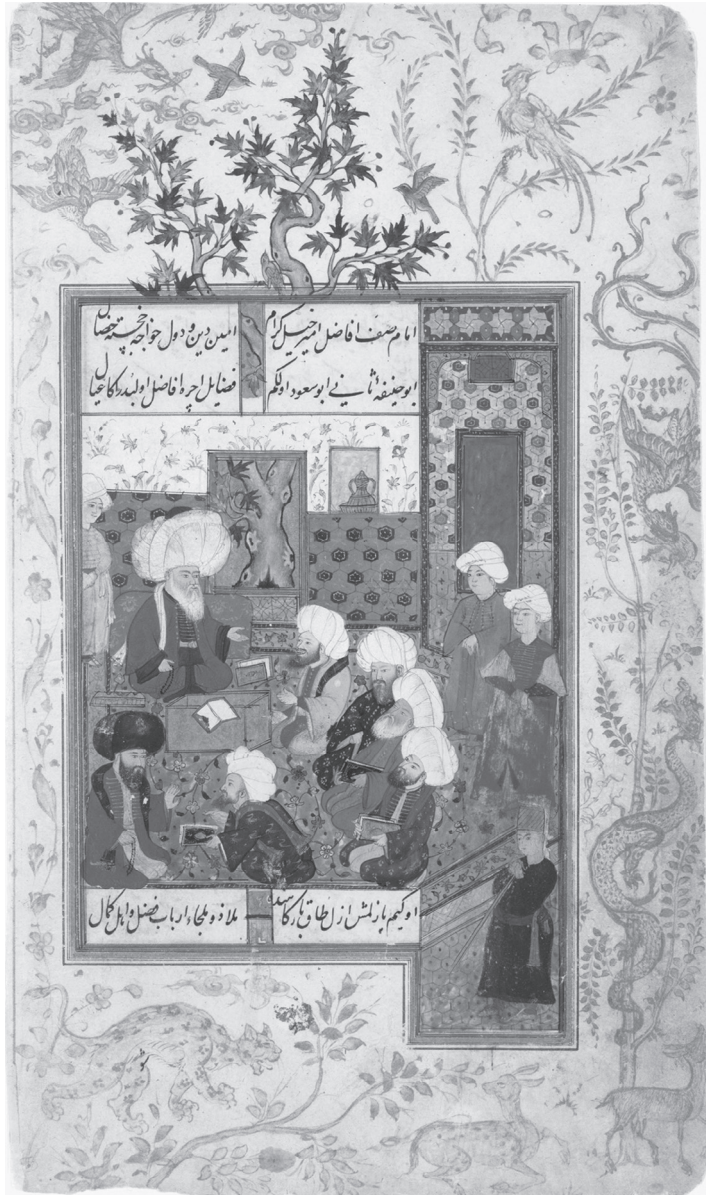


FIGURE 2.2 *The Great Ebussuud Teaching Law*

A page from an illustrated manuscript of Mahmud Abdülbaki *Divan* (1526/27–1600) depicting the powerful shaikh al-Islam (chief jurist) of Istanbul, Ebussuud (1490–1574), engaged in a discussion with other religious thinkers. The laudatory poem that accompanies the image refers to Ebussuud as the “second Abu Hanifah,” the celebrated eighth-century jurist whose legal school (Hanafi) the Ottoman Empire followed.

Source: Folio from a *Divan* of Mahmud Abdülbaki

Author: Mahmud ‘Abd al-Baqi (1526–1600)

Place of origin: Attributed to Baghdad, Iraq

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of George D. Pratt, 1925. 25.83.9.

Here, I present a translation of eleven fatwas (religio-legal opinion) by one of the most influential scholars in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, Ebussuud (d. 1574). In these fatwas, Ebussuud attempts to offer a refutation of the Safavids' ideological claims and develops the religio-legal tools that the Ottoman government used in its war against the Safavids and their supporters, who were known as Qizilbash (Red Head) for they wore the red headgear designed by Shah Ismail's father, Haydar (d. 1488).⁴

EBUSSUUD EFENDI (1490–1574) AND THE OFFICE OF CHIEF JURIST

Ebussuud was born and educated entirely in Istanbul. In 1516, he entered the Ottoman scholarly bureaucratic service.⁵ After holding a string of hierarchically organized professorial and judicial positions, he ascended to the position of chief judge (*kadiasker*) of Rumeli in 1537. In 1545, he became the chief jurist (*şeyhülislam*) and remained in that position until his death in 1574.⁶

Ebussuud's tenure as chief jurist coincided with significant shifts in the empire's administration in general and in the status and function of the chief jurist in particular. Between 1530 and 1600, in connection with the new momentum in state formation and bureaucratic consolidation, the development of a comprehensive legal system that protected the rights and defined the limits of bureaucratic officials and subjects increasingly became a concern.⁷ Laws and precedents (written and unwritten) emerged to regulate the appointments of bureaucrats. Dynastic laws were enacted arranging relations among government officials in the provinces as well as between officials and subjects.⁸ In this context of heightened sensitivity to law and legal order, it appears that *sharī'a*—the collection of religio-legal rules scholars had derived from Islamic scriptural sources through particular methods—increased in importance. Many among the elite and other groups considered *sharī'a* to be one of the criteria of legitimacy for legal and political acts in the empire, including dynastic law and the ruler's own deeds.⁹ As a consequence, scholars played an increasingly prominent role in the formation of ideology and legal order in the empire as interpreters of scriptures and articulators of *sharī'a* principles.

Ebussuud, as chief judge, occupied the highest position in the scholarly hierarchy and, in most cases, acted as the representative of scholars in government service. He issued fatwas to articulate his religio-legal opinions not only about private acts of individuals but also about public legislation, such as criminal law, taxation, and land law, as well as rulings that affected imperial political ideology and foreign relations.¹⁰ As the empire's top legal official, he had the capacity through his opinions to influence both legal practice and official ideology in the realm.

THE FATWAS ABOUT THE SAFAVID QIZILBASH

In the Hanafi legal tradition, the term *fatwa* signified the religio-legal opinions articulated by the scholars who lived after the generation of the school's founders had passed away (Abu Hanifa, d. 767; Abu Yusuf, d. 798; Muhammad al-Shaybani, d. 805). Generally speaking, the opinions of the founders held higher status than those of later scholars. Some opinions of later scholars were collected in separate books, called *Fatawa*, *Waqi'at*, or *Nawazil*.¹¹ Later, as these opinions gained authority through recognition within the Hanafi scholarly community, they gradually began to take their place in works of jurisprudence (*fiqh*).¹²

It appears that from the second half of the fifteenth century, in the central lands of the Ottoman Empire, a distinct form and language developed to record fatwas, especially those issued by chief jurists. Generally speaking, Ottoman fatwa documents include two parts. The question component is usually longer and summarizes the issue at hand, posing a question to be answered by the jurist. The answer component is typically very short and includes the answer of the jurist as a simple yes or no. The language of fatwas is in most cases Ottoman Turkish and simple prose. Generic names such as Zeyd, Hind, and Bekr are used to represent the person in the legal issue under examination. Not many original fatwa documents have survived; nevertheless, copies of them are abundant in the fatwa collections, available in manuscript and published form.¹³

Ebussuud's fatwas presented here have been preserved either in collections consisting solely of his fatwas, or in those comprising the fatwas of several chief jurists.¹⁴ They were written in Turkish prose, except for the Arabic prayer section after fatwa 3. Fatwas 8–11 use the generic names Zeyd, Amr, and Bekr; others refer to the Qizilbash (supporters of the Safavids) in general. As for the length and relative proportion of the question and answer parts, fatwas 1 and 4–11 are typical, containing short answers and long questions. It is noteworthy, however, that the answers to fatwas 2–3 are relatively extensive, occupying more space than the questions to which they respond.

It is possible to date only four of Ebussuud's fatwas with any certainty. Ebussuud himself gave the date 955 (1548–49) for the composition of the first three fatwas; he seems to have written them before or during Suleyman's (r. 1520–1566) campaign against Iran in support of Alqas Mirza's (d. 1550) bid for the Safavid throne in 1548–49. As fatwa 4 refers to the Nahcivan campaign, which took place during 1553–54, it can be dated to roughly that time.¹⁵

Fatwas 5–7 refer to a state of war between the Qizilbash and Ottoman forces. One can therefore suggest that they belong to the period before the treaty of Amasya (1555), after which, during Ebussuud's lifetime, fighting between the main armies of the Safavids and the Ottomans, as well as between their local forces, decreased and became marginal. Finally, neither the content nor external evidence provides any clue as to the date of composition for fatwas 8–11.

TRANSLATION

Fatwa 1

Question: Is it legally and religiously permissible to fight against the Qizilbash? Are those who kill the Qizilbash deemed as holy warriors (*gazis*), and those who are killed by them as martyrs?

Answer: Yes [war against them is permissible]. It is a holy war deserving the highest reward; theirs is a great martyrdom.

Another Question: Is the reason for the permissibility of war against them only that they rebelled and showed enmity against the sultan of Muslims and drew the sword against the army of Islam? Or are there any other reasons?

Answer: They are rebels (*bagi*) as well as unbelievers (*kafir*) for several reasons.

Fatwa 2

Question: It is said that their leader is a descendant of the messenger of God [Muhammad], peace and prayer be upon him. If this is true, can there be any doubt [about the judgments above]?

Answer: No, not at all. Their wicked acts demonstrate that they do not have any relationship with this pure genealogy. In addition, reliable people reported that when his father, Ismail, first went out [for his political bid], he pressured the descendants of the Prophet in the tomb of Imam Ali al-Rida b. Musa al-Kazim and other places to include his [Ismail's] name in Bahr-i Ansab. He killed all those who would not dare to slander [the Prophet by including Ismail in the list of his descendants]. Then some descendants of the Prophet did what Ismail asked in order to evade execution. However, they took care to trace his lineage to a descendant of the Prophet who was known as infertile and childless by scholars of the esteemed genealogy, so that others could understand the truth.

Nevertheless, even if we assume that the authenticity of his lineage is proven, as long as he is without religion, he is no different from other infidels. The descendants of the Prophet, peace and prayer be upon him, are those who take care of the symbols of flawless shari'a and protect [obey] the clear-cut rules. Noah, peace be upon him, prayed to the Lord of Dignity for the rescue of his biological son, Ken'an. He [Noah] received the response, "He [Ken'an] is not from your family."⁶ He [Ken'an] was punished and drowned together with other unbelievers. If being offspring of the great prophets, peace and prayer be upon them, was reason for salvation from worldly and otherworldly punishments, none of the unbelievers of various types would be punished in this world or hereafter by virtue of their being progeny of the prophet Adam, peace be upon him. God knows best, and he is most just.

Fatwa 3

Question: Although the said group claims to be Shi'is and declares, "There is no God but Allah," what acts of theirs require this [denigration as unbelievers]? Please explain clearly and in detail.

Answer: They are not Shi'is and do not belong to any of "the seventy-three sects, all of which will go to Hell, except the Sunni sect (*ehl-i sunnet*)" as the Exalted Messenger, peace and prayer be upon him, said. They created a new sect of unbelief and deviance by taking an amount of wickedness and immorality from each sect and adding it to the unbelief and innovation of their own choice. They keep increasing [their unbelief and innovation] day by day.

The detailed judgment, according to noble shari'a, on the crimes that they have been perpetrating is as follows: These outrageous people became unbelievers as they scorned the Holy Qur'an, the noble shari'a, and the religion of Islam, disdained and killed scholars on account of their knowledge, [and] considered their immoral cursed leader god and prostrated before him. [They] considered permissible many religiously forbidden acts whose prohibition has been established by definite scriptural sources, and cursed Abu Bakr and 'Umar (the first two caliphs after Muhammad's death), may God be satisfied with them. In addition, they became unbelievers because they denied the Holy Qur'an by defaming A'isha the trustworthy (Prophet's wife), may God be pleased with her, who was exonerated by the revelation of several verses [in the Qur'an]. By doing so, they also cursed the Prophet (*hazret-i risalet-penah*) and blemished his saintly personality.

According to the consensus of a multitude of scholars from different times and places, killing them is permissible (*mubah*); those who doubt their unbelief become unbelievers.

In the opinions of Abu Hanifa, Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 778), and al-Awza'i (d. 774), may God have mercy upon them, if they truly repent and convert once more to Islam, they escape execution—as their unbelief is the same as that of other unbelievers. However, in the opinions of Malik b. Anas (d. 795), al-Shafi'i (d. 820), Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855), Layth b. Sa'd (d. 791), Ishaq b. Rahuya (d. 853), and a large number of other great scholars of religion, their repentance is never accepted; their conversion to Islam is not taken into consideration, and they are definitely to be killed as scripturally defined punishment (*hadd*). The imam, the refuge of religion, may God support and strengthen him, can legitimately act according to any of these opinions from the scholars of religion.

It has been established by the testimony of unquestionable authenticity that they [the Qizilbash] perpetrated the said crimes. There is no doubt or confusion about their situation. There is no hesitation whatsoever about their soldiers, who participated in the fights and their companions [that they should be killed]. However, people in the cities and the countryside who live peacefully and stay away from their [the Qizilbash's] acts, and whose appearances confirm their trustworthiness, are not subjected to their rules and punishments unless it becomes apparent that they are lying.

Killing this group is more important than killing other unbelievers. Because of this [urgency], Abu Bakr, the Trustworthy, at the time of his caliphate, preferred and prioritized waging war against the apostate group led by Musaylima al-Kazzab,¹⁷ with the unanimous support of the noble Companions, may God be pleased with all of them, over moving against Syria and against the unbelievers around Medina. Similar was the fight against Khawarij during the caliphate of 'Ali, may God honor him. The corruption of this group [the Qizilbash] is serious. Exerting effort to wipe their corruption from the earth is the most important endeavor.

Allah is the Helper and the Support!

Our Lord! Forgive our sins and our excesses in our affairs. Establish our feet firmly. Help us against the group of unbelievers.

Our Master, our best, the pioneer of the century, Ebussuud, who is the jurist in the city of Islam and victory [Istanbul], wrote this in 955 [A.H.] (1548–49 CE).

Fatwa 4

Question: Can the Qizilbash who were captured during the Nahcivan campaign be enslaved?

Answer: No.

Fatwa 5

Question: When the Qizilbash group was attacked in accordance with the command of the sultan, some of the children and adult captives were Armenians. Should these Armenians be free?

Answer: Yes. Unless Armenians attacked the army of Islam together with the Qizilbash army, they cannot be legally enslaved.

Fatwa 6

Question: According to an opinion reported from Imam A'zam [that is, Abu Hanifa], an apostate woman can be captured before she arrives in the Abode of War (*dar al-harb*).¹⁸ As capturing a Qizilbash woman brings the army of Islam utmost strength and pride and causes the enemies of correct religion extreme weakness and derogation, is it permissible to act in accordance with this opinion?

Answer: Yes.

Fatwa 7

Question: In accordance with the abovementioned opinion, can captive women be forced to serve and to have sexual intercourse?

Answer: They can be forced to perform all services except for sexual intercourse. They are apostates. Unless they convert to Islam, sexual intercourse with them cannot be undertaken.

Fatwa 8

Question: If Bekr the son of Amr kills Zeyd, whose Qizilbash identity and act of cursing the four rightly guided caliphs were established, will there be any legal consequences [for Bekr]?

Answer: If it is established that the slaying took place immediately after cursing, he [Bekr] is not liable.

Fatwa 9

Question: What is the legal consequence for Zeyd, who says, “Damnation to Yazid,¹⁹ and damnation to those who do not damn him?”

Answer: It is not lawful to damn those who do not damn. Not damning does not equate to affirmation of his [Yazid’s] acts.

Fatwa 10

Question: What is legally necessary for Zeyd, who says, “Mu’awiya is not a good person?”

Answer: He receives discretionary punishment (*ta’zir*).

Fatwa 11

Question: What is legally necessary for Zeyd, who damned Mu’awiya, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad?

Answer: Administration of a severe discretionary punishment and imprisonment are necessary for him.²⁰

NOTES

1. Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 9–12.
2. Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906–962 / 1500–1555)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983), 153–66; Said Amir Arjomand, “The Rise of Shah Esma‘il as a Mahdist Revolution,” *Studies on Persianate Societies* 3 (2005): 44–51.
3. Faruk Sümer, *Safevî Devletinin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerinin Rolü* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 1–56; Saim Savaş, *XVI. Asırda Anadolu’da Alevilik* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 11–15; Rıza Yıldırım, “Turcomans Between Two Empires: The Origins of the Qizilbash Identity in Anatolia, 1447–1514” (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2008).
4. Before Ebussuud, at least two other scholars from the Ottoman learned establishment, Sangörez Nureddin Hamza (d. 1522) and Kemalpaşazade (d. 1534) asserted their opinions about the Safavids and their supporters. For the opinions of Sangörez Nureddin

- Hamza and Kemalpaşazade, see M. C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ, “Yeni Kaynak ve Vesikaların Işığı Altında Yavuz Sultan Selim’in İran Seferi,” *Tarih Dergisi* 22 (1968): 53–55, 77–78, docs. 1–2.
5. For further information on Ebussuud’s life and career, see Nikolay Antov’s essay in chapter 1 in this volume.
 6. For Ebussuud’s biography, see Nevizade Atayi, *Hada’iq al-Haqa’iq*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1989), 183–88. See also Richard Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Ithaca, 1986), 272–96; Ahmet Akgündüz, “Ebüssuûd Efendi,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c10/c100355.pdf>.
 7. Cornell H. Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân,” in *Soliman Le Magnifique et son Temps: Actes du Colloque de Paris Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais 7–10 mars 1990*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 159–77.
 8. Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âlî, 1541–1600* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 191–200; Ahmet Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1990–96), vols. 4–9.
 9. Colin Imber, “Süleymân as Caliph of the Muslims: Ebû’s-Su’ûd’s Formulation of Ottoman Dynastic Ideology,” in *Soliman le Magnifique et son Temps*, 179–84; Halil İnalcık, “Islamization of Ottoman Laws on Land and Land Tax,” in *Osmanistik-Turkologie-Diplomatik*, ed. Christa Fragner and Klaus Schwarz (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1992), 101–18.
 10. For Ebussuud’s fatwas and legal opinions, see Colin Imber, *Ebu’s-su’ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Abdullah Demir, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi, Devlet-i Aliyye’nin Büyük Hukukçusu* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 2006).
 11. Katip Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zunun an Asami-l-Kutub wa-l-Funun* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 2:1280–83. See also Murteza Bedir, *Buhara Hukuk Okulu* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2014), 49–54, 76–80.
 12. Wael B. Hallaq, “From Fatwas to Furu’: Growth and Change in Islamic Substantive,” *Islamic Law and Society* 1 (1994): 29–65.
 13. Uriel Heyd, “Some Aspects of the Ottoman Fetva,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1969): 37–46; Şükrü Özen, “Osmanlı Döneminde Fetva Literatürü,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 5 (2005): 249–378.
 14. For a publication of Ebussuud’s fatwas with a transliteration, see Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Kanunî Devri Şeyhülislâmı Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları* (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2012). For general information about the collections of Ebussuud’s fatwas, see Özen, “Osmanlı Döneminde Fetva Literatürü,” 263–64, 285–89.
 15. Remzi Kılıç, *Kanuni Devri Osmanlı-İran Münasebetleri* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2006), 257–90, 312–32.
 16. Qur’an, 11:46.
 17. Maslama b. Thumama (d. 633) declared his prophethood and led the rebellion of the Banu Hanifa tribe against the Medina government during 632–633. For this, see Ahmet

- Önköl, "Müseylimetülkezzâb," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c32/c320069.pdf>.
18. The lands under the rule of non-Muslims. For more information about *dar al-harb*, see Ahmet Özel, "Dârülharb," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/co8/co80389.pdf>.
 19. Yazid b. Mu'awiya (d. 683) was the second Umayyad caliph. As he was the caliph and allegedly gave the orders at the time when Husayn b. Ali (d. 680) was executed, Shi'is had a special hatred for Yazid.
 20. The difference in the opinions about giving damnation to Mu'awiya and Yazid probably results from the fact that the former was a companion of the Prophet and the latter was not. In Sunni understanding, all companions of the Prophet are above all criticism; insulting any of them must be punished.

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III. A Mughal Debate About Jain Asceticism

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Mughal ruling elites frequently hosted debates between representatives of different religious communities. Most well-known are the discussions initiated under the auspices of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in the 'Ibadat-khana, the house of religious debate, in the 1570s. Although the 'Ibadat-khana has been widely cited in modern scholarship, it remains a poorly understood institution.¹ Scholars remain uncertain about even the basic details of the 'Ibadat-khana, such as its physical location, and, more important, have mistakenly considered the 'Ibadat-khana coterminous with all Mughal-sponsored religious discussions. On the contrary, many imperially directed debates concerning religious matters took place in other arenas. Some debates featured different Muslim groups. Others also included members of other traditions, such as Hindus, Jains, and European Christians. There is no single record of these religious and theological exchanges, but individual discussions are recorded in Mughal chronicles and other Persian-language texts, some authored by visitors to the Mughal court.² In addition to Persian sources, Sanskrit texts offer a wealth of information in this regard. In particular, a cache of Sanskrit works that date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries record numerous religious discussions held at the central Mughal court that featured Jains, a religious minority group in India. Here I translate a religious debate described in one of these works between Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) and Siddhicandra, a Jain monk well known to both Akbar and Jahangir, about the appropriateness of Jain ascetic practices.

Sanskrit works on the Mughals that were authored by Jain intellectuals are little known in modern scholarship but constitute a formidable body of materials and

contain extensive historical information about the courts of Akbar and Jahangir. Six such texts were penned between 1589 and 1653 that add substantial depth to our understanding of Mughal court culture.³ These works chronicled many events at the imperial court and especially focused on relations between Jain religious leaders and the ruling elite. None of these Sanskrit works have been translated into English, and few Mughal historians know Sanskrit. Thus it is unsurprising that these rich texts have been largely ignored to date in modern scholarly treatments of the Mughals. Sanskrit works on the Mughals also suffer from the widespread assumption that Sanskrit writers were not historically minded, and so (the logic goes) we cannot trust their narrations of real world events in the same way that we can rely upon the veracity of Persian-language court chronicles. Contrary to this misleading assumption, the general outline of much of what is discussed in Jain-authored Sanskrit texts concerning imperial events is confirmed by Mughal court chronicles and other historical materials, including inscriptions and European travelogues. The details of many specific episodes need to be understood within a literary framework, as I discuss below.

Mughal religious discussions with Jain ascetics occurred in the wider context of Jain relations with the imperial court. Jain monks first entered the royal court in the 1560s, early in Akbar's reign. These Jains were largely monks from Gujarat and were members of the Shvetambara branch of Jainism (and, within that, primarily of two major sects, the Tapa Gaccha and the Kharatara Gaccha). From the 1580s to the 1610s, Jain monks enjoyed a continuous presence at the courts of Akbar and Jahangir.⁴ Jain ascetics served in a wide variety of capacities in the imperial milieu, including acting as companions to the kings, informants for a wide range of Sanskrit knowledge systems, and participants in religious debates. Both emperors at times exhibited behavior informed by their Jain interlocutors. Akbar reportedly ordered a Jain religious ceremony performed to counteract a curse on Jahangir's daughter who was born under ill-fated stars.⁵ Jahangir once swore a vow of nonviolence, in part, under Jain encouragement.⁶ Akbar and Jahangir also both took an active interest in Jain religious hierarchies and occasionally sought to interfere in this realm. For example, Akbar raised the internal ranks of specific Jain leaders. The debate translated below narrates an instance in which Jahangir sought to alter Jain renunciation practices.

The debate between Jahangir and Siddhicandra about Jain asceticism occurs at the end of a text penned by Siddhicandra himself, titled *Bhanucandraganikarita* (Acts of Bhanucandra). Siddhicandra wrote the *Acts of Bhanucandra* primarily to chronicle relations between his teacher, Bhanucandra, and Emperor Akbar. He proclaimed in the second verse of the work: "Bhanucandra, the protector of sages, gained fame and good fortune by enlightening glorious Shah Akbar, the best of men. The Jain teaching flourished as a result, and so let this part of Bhanucandra's story be heard in full detail."⁷ The work contains four chapters, the final of which continues for several years after Akbar's death in 1605. The debate translated here occurs at the end of the final chapter and, in addition to Siddhicandra and Jahangir,

also features Bhanucandra and a cameo appearance by Nur Jahan. The discussion centered around the question of whether Siddhicandra was justified in renouncing sex, wealth, and material comforts at such a young age (he was in his twenties). The debate also engages with the extent of Mughal royal authority, and Siddhicandra was ultimately condemned for daring to disobey Jahangir's royal order to take a wife and accept an appointment within the Mughal administration. The debate concluded when Jahangir, tired of arguing, issued an imperial order (*farman*) exiling Siddhicandra and all other Jain ascetics from populated centers across the Mughal polity. The final verses of the *Bhanucandraganicarita* celebrate that Jahangir soon rescinded this order and Jains once again moved freely across the Mughal Empire.

Although Siddhicandra ended his tale on a positive note, the final cessation of Mughal relations with Jain ascetics would occur only a few years later. Jahangir issued another proclamation exiling Jains shortly after withdrawing his initial ban. This second ban also did not remain in place for long, but it seems that Jain monks were not able to recover their status at Jahangir's court.⁸ Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb had no known ongoing relations with Jain religious leaders, although both had dealings with Gujarati-based Jain merchants.⁹ Thus the debate about asceticism marked the beginning of the end of relations between the Mughal kings and Jain monks, although Siddhicandra does not overtly acknowledge this in his narrative.

This debate serves several purposes in the *Acts of Bhanucandra*. In large part, it was an opportunity for Siddhicandra to defend the virtues of Jain monks who engaged with worldly courts. Links between monks and courts had long been a source of anxiety within the Jain tradition. Many Jain monks worried about both the reality and the perception that laxity could occur among renunciants who spent time enmeshed in the material comforts of court life.¹⁰ In this debate, Siddhicandra refused to be swayed toward rescinding his vows, despite staggering consequences for himself and all other Jain monks within Mughal domains. At the end of the episode, he even added a positive gloss to the affair by noting that Jahangir's temporary exile afforded him the opportunity to work off some bad karma.¹¹ The debate and the resulting temporary exile thus showed the strength of Jain convictions and ultimately justified decades of royal relations as acceptable and even beneficial for Jain religious leaders.

The episode also serves as a coda for Siddhicandra's narrative of Jain-Mughal relations, largely through the prism of Bhanucandra's life. We are uncertain of the exact composition date of the *Acts of Bhanucandra*, but it was likely penned c. 1620, when imperial relations with Jain monks had ceased. Accordingly, the work was unlikely to be instructional for Jain readers who might have wished to forge future ties with the Mughal ruling elite. But it was nonetheless an important account of more than thirty years of imperial connections with Jain religious leaders. In this sense, the identity of Siddhicandra, the author, is pertinent. Siddhicandra had spent much of his youth at the Mughal court and so perhaps penned this work, in part, to make sense of a formative aspect of his own life, especially his dual location within a luxurious court and a strict ascetic tradition.

Last, the debate features a critical discussion of Jain religious ideas. Both Siddhicandra and Jahangir engage with Jain philosophical concepts and deploy arguments that are time-honored and convincing from a Jain perspective in support of their respective positions. As I have argued elsewhere, Jains in Mughal India found the imperial elite to be readily available and thoughtful interlocutors regarding a consideration of Jain religious precepts.¹² Accordingly, Jain readers probably took quite seriously the challenges posed to their religious practices in a Mughal courtly environment and their own responses.

Modern readers ought to take this debate as recorded by Siddhicandra as true in its occurrence and overall arc. Significant evidence in the form of texts and inscriptions from multiple sources and languages confirm the veracity of the event and the subsequent exile of Jain monks.¹³ Persian sources mention nothing about this specific debate between Jahangir and Siddhicandra, but Mughal histories discuss Jain celibacy, and so there is a precedent for Jahangir's interest in the topic.¹⁴ In addition, Siddhicandra's teacher, Bhanucandra, who appears in this episode, is listed along with two other Jain monks among the learned men of the age in the *Akbarnama*,¹⁵ and thus the imperial record confirms the appearance of specific Jain monks at court.

Nonetheless, in strict historical terms, Siddhicandra's narrative is probably inaccurate in some of its details. For example, Siddhicandra represents this debate as occurring entirely in Sanskrit (except for one verse in Hindavi, Old Hindi), whereas it certainly took place either in Persian or a form of Old Hindi. Siddhicandra was fluent in Persian, by his own admission,¹⁶ and Hindavi was a common spoken language at the imperial court. In contrast, we have no evidence that Jahangir (much less Nur Jahan) could converse in Sanskrit. Also, the framework of the discussion rests on shaky historical grounds at certain points. Perhaps most obviously, Nur Jahan appears in the audience hall and participates in the conversation. Her involvement is rhetorically powerful given Jahangir's emphasis on the virtues of marriage but flies in the face of scholarly consensus regarding Mughal purdah norms.¹⁷

Despite such imprecisions, we cannot responsibly take the poetic liberty to reimagine the past that is deployed by Siddhicandra as evidence that his *Bhanucandraganicarita* is totally unreliable. We must find other, more nuanced ways to understand this source, which offers both a compelling record of previously unknown imperial events and a unique, literary view of Mughal imperial dynamics. Below I offer some specific ideas about how the literary aspects of Siddhicandra's narrative add to our understanding of Mughal India. In addition, we ought to recognize that texts in early modern India, including Mughal imperial chronicles, were often reformulated to express timeless truths rather than banal historical accuracy. In this sense, we should pause before condemning the *Acts of Bhanucandra* as fiction. For Siddhicandra and his Mughal interlocutors, this narrative captures truth in its most important form.

For moderns, too, the debate about Jain asceticism is all the richer for its literary elements, which communicate a great deal about popular perceptions of the

Mughals and how early modern thinkers chose to write about the Mughals in Sanskrit. Siddhicandra draws upon both Persianate and Sanskrit traditions to describe Jahangir. In this episode, he refers to Jahangir as a king using a range of vocabulary, including pure Sanskrit words (for example, *maharaja*, *ksitipa*) and also Sanskritized Persian terms (for example, *shaha* from *shah*, *sutratrana* from *sultan*). The work also invokes the emperor's ruling title Jahangir (*jahangira*) and the term *sphuramana* (royal order), which has the double meaning of *farman* (in Persian) and "a thing which goes forth" (in Sanskrit). At times, especially in the second half of the debate, Siddhicandra depicts Jahangir as a skillful philosopher and more in line with Jain thinking than Siddhicandra. The king deftly deploys the Jain concept of relativism or multiple viewpoints (*syadvada*), for example. And as the narrator of the episode, Siddhicandra lauds his opponent who "grasped Jain philosophy." However, Jahangir also appears as a hopeless drunkard and oversexed earlier in the exchange. The debate ends when the king abandons logic and resorts to violence, ordering an elephant to crush the obstinate Siddhicandra.

Much of the episode takes place within a squarely Jain context. The broad social setting is, of course, Jahangir's royal court, but the content of the debate concerns Jain ideas, Jain practices, and largely Jain-focused arguments on both sides. Even when Jahangir brings up arguably non-Jain perspectives, these were of concern within the tradition. For example, he mentions God at one point. A single, all-powerful deity would strike many modern Jains as incompatible with their religion, but Jain monks at the Mughal court argued quite vehemently for their status as monotheists.¹⁸ The emphasis on Jain concerns probably reflects Siddhicandra's expected Jain audience for his text. Nonetheless, there are moments when Siddhicandra admits the relevance, even the necessity, of a Perso-Islamic perspective. Perhaps most notably, in response to a specific challenge from Nur Jahan, Siddhicandra cites as a precedent for his youthful renunciation the story of Ibrahim ibn Adham of Balkh, who disavowed all worldly possessions, including his crown, as a young man. Moreover, Siddhicandra introduces this Islamic example with the sole Hindavi verse in the entire *Bhanucandraganicarita*. The invocation of a story known to the Mughal elite in a language understood at court signals the decisive role of Mughal royal authority in this imperial debate.

This episode ultimately glorified Siddhicandra and justified his commitment to asceticism, but perhaps not as strongly as Siddhicandra intended. Even in the face of disastrous consequences, Siddhicandra refused to counteract his vows. In the end, his rightness in doing so was even recognized by Jahangir, who warmly welcomed him back to court after a short period of exile. Nonetheless, the well-worded objections of Jahangir and the political peril of this debate continue to percolate in the reader's mind. In particular, the king's exiling *farman* articulates an influential, time-honored position among many Jains, namely: monks belong in the forest rather than at court. Moreover, presumably most early modern readers knew the final end to this story, that is, the cessation of relations between Jain religious leaders and the Mughal rulers following Jahangir's second exile of Jain monks. Given

this conclusion, it is far from clear that Jain ascetic vows are compatible with the expectations of Mughal courtly life.

For moderns, there are multiple values to reading this episode and the *Acts of Bhanucandra* overall. This is an almost entirely untouched historical source that narrates previously unknown events at the Mughal court. This particular debate provides insight into how Mughal elites engaged with the practices of other religious traditions, especially those perceived as in conflict with imperial wishes. In addition, Siddhicandra revealed much about Jain concerns with how monks operated in a Mughal political space and provided an alternative view of the Mughals, one that comes from a non-Muslim perspective. This episode contains much hard historical truth, but it also offers many literary and religious insights that are grounded in creative rather than factual details. Historians still often need to be reminded that perceptions of the past are no less important than the truth of the past and arguably far more interesting. Accordingly, modern scholars should value Siddhicandra's historical narrative for both its historicity and its literary narration. Ultimately, Mughal historians might take up the broader challenge of the *Acts of Bhanucandra* and think anew about early modern conceptions of truth as not being confined to the historical realm but as equally important in literary terms.¹⁹

TRANSLATION

One time Jahangir, lord of the earth, was nearly overcome with unbridled affection and said to the most excellent teacher Bhanucandra: "Siddhicandra is unique, kind, beautiful, and virtuous. Let him spend some time with me every day." Upon hearing Siddhicandra's teachings, the king's hair stood on end with joy. He served at Siddhicandra's feet like a bee attracted to a lotus. So much time passed thus under Siddhicandra's instruction that the monk's chain of virtues spread across the four directions. The king's mind held fast to him with unbreakable love such that he even neglected his royal elephants. Due to excessive affection, Siddhicandra was also unable to tear his thoughts away from the king, like an elephant sunk deep in mud.

One time across the entire earth the sky was whitened by moons rays that were like the waves of the flowing Ganges.²⁰

*When the moon rose, it was as if all mountains became as white as Mount
Kailash,
trees seemed like white umbrellas, a lump of clay appeared as cream,
the ocean became like pure milk, creepers seemed like pearl necklaces,
fruits were like conch shells, and people of all nations looked like those
from the white island.*²¹

Innocent cow herders put down their pots, thinking that the cows are giving milk.

Young women likewise tuck blue water lilies behind their ears, taking them to be white lotuses that blossom under the moon.

A forest woman collects jujube fruits that she mistakes for pearls.

For whom does thick moonlight not cause confusion?²²

On a pavilion women grasp around with the hope of gaining a pearl necklace.

In the cow pen cow herders try to churn the milk that appears to be gathered in pots.

Gardeners desiring flowers attempt to gather up the moonlight as if it were jasmine.

Who is not perplexed by looking at the luminescent rays of the confusion-inducing moon?

A cat licks the moon rays as they hit a bowl, thinking them milk.

An elephant, seeing them through the trees, takes them as lotus stalks.

At the end of lovemaking a woman draws them from her bed, believing them to be her clothes.

Look! The bright moon has confounded this world.²³

Bees, who are usually enchanted by the smell of flowers, become confused and wander around unable to identify white water lilies.

See how pairs of swans, even though they are close companions, look up.

Even mad elephants, who have freed their mutual hostility out of desire, slowly begin to doubt a female elephant that has been touched by the rays.

An elephant touches its trunk to its tusk, which drowns in the net of moonlight.

Nearly blinded, a Chamara deer apprehensively wraps its white tail around its stalk-like neck.

A swan tearfully laments upon looking at her offspring that seem like jewels.

How can I describe even the milk ocean and the Himalayas? Both are surpassed by the moon.

Have heaven and earth been anointed with camphor? Have they been smeared with sandalwood paste?

Have they been purified with mercury? Have they been rubbed with crystal?

Such doubts arise when the full moon is out, which refreshes white lotuses, teaches the vows of erotic love,

is a mirror for young women everywhere, and is a friend to Chakora birds.²⁴

At that time, while Siddhicandra was lecturing about some of the best saints, the king's mind wandered elsewhere for a bit, and he said: "You, who are attached to Parabrahma—how many years have elapsed since your birth?" Siddhicandra replied: "Twenty-five." Then it dawned on the glorious shah that Siddhicandra's problem was similar to that of a male cuckoo bird cooing on a mango tree within a forest of religious practice. Jahangir said,

You possess signs that you are fit to be an earthly king. O friend, you are resplendent with the radiating beauty of youth. Given that your age is suited for pursuing fiery young women, why do you abandon sensual pleasures and give yourself to austerities?

Under the guise of a gleaming smile, the sage replied firmly with a voice resounding like a drum,

Good people do not ridicule initiation at a young age. For the wise do not hesitate to begin drinking nectar. Which is better suited to austerities: youth or old age? Death lurks everywhere for living beings. O raja, there is no vigor in old age, and without vigor how are there austerities? A mendicant knows the delusion in such ideas. Under the guise of grey hair the mind mocks a man who undertakes difficult activities in old age. Austerity, like the blade of a sword, annihilates the formidable enemy of sin from prior lives and this existence. Serious people respect this. Like the sun, austerities reveal truth and falseness and give clarity to good people, rescuing them from the lull of darkness.

King Jahangir, his eyes rolling about on account of alcohol, erupted at him with a roar:

In the prime of youth, which is the domain of God of Love, how do you keep your mind from wandering?

Siddhicandra replied,

I keep my mind firm through knowledge and also protect it with other things, just as you draw an elephant with a hook.

Then the emperor said,

Without such knowledge, how can I properly understand what you have said?

Siddhicandra responded,

Knowledge is not relevant in this matter. Just as Brahmans have turned their minds away from the luxuries that you enjoy, likewise I, who have never tasted such flavors, have rejected worldly pleasures since birth. People know that a wife who follows her dead husband into

the fire and immolates herself is mentally detached from her relations. It is likewise for the minds of ascetics who are absorbed in contemplating Parabrahma and immersed in an ocean of tranquility. Those fish in a sea of happiness cannot be derailed by kings or emperors. They walk a pure path and strive to acquire virtues. They serve the needs of others and are abundant in meritorious acts. They lack greed but happily take vows. Those ascetics are their own lords, independent even of the gods. Their minds are detached from worldly pleasures, and people can infer that they have virtues such as extreme nonattachment.

When he was spoken to thus, the king stood there for a long time, pondering the speech's import, drowning in ecstasy, and with the hair of his handsome body standing on end.

*Like a beloved of the God of Love who shoots flower-arrows under a blossoming tree,
like a Lakshmi from the ocean, which is full of jewels that are lustrous good fortune,
is your most beloved, primary queen, Nur Mahal.²⁵
It is as if the smile on her moon-like face cannot be outdone, not even by light.*

*She was radiant, her fingers like delicate buds and adorned with flowers for fingernails.
Her pair of creeper-like arms were served by the king's eyes, as if by black bees.
She had a girdle around her low slung hips.
Due to excessive sadness, her waist had grown thin.
Her locks of black hair shone in all directions,
like a night that follows her face according to movement of the moon.
Her face is fanned by the entire world with chowries that are lovely eyes.
Her queen of faces possesses a stalk-like neck.
Her mouth can be compared to a lute that makes sweet sounds.
Her straight teeth glittered like pearls in her mouth.
Although her feet are lotuses, the swan does not serve them
because the swan is put to shame by her graceful gait.
Among all her limbs, this alone is a great flaw:
No seeing person has had such pleasure for centuries.
In the harem, the king's mind took pleasure in her.
Even when lakhs of constellations were visible, his eye is drawn to that moon-like beauty.*

Then the beloved wife of the emperor said,

Wherever there is youth, speech that reflects soundness of mind is impossible.

Having heard her words, an emboldened Siddhicandra responded,

Is was not so for the king of Balkh, who conquered his senses as a young man. Thus they say [in Hindavi²⁶]: “He gave up 16,000 palaces, eighteen lakh horses, and the city of Balkh for the sake of his Lord.”²⁷ There is no distinguishing quality whatsoever either in youth or the absence thereof. One could have soundness of mind exclusively from the power of merit accumulated in a prior life, whereas some mendicants have absolutely no mental soundness from childhood. Similarly, mosquitoes fly through the air, but elephants do not. Many older people are obsessed with material objects. Therefore, age is not the cause of mental stability.

Nur Mahal, puffed up with pride, answered him sharply,

But ascetic practices are celebrated at the end, for people who have had their fill of sensual pleasures. Only people who have enjoyed all types of sensual delights should renounce them. They are proper renouncers, unlike those who have not even tasted such pleasures. Those ascetics who have not even sampled worldly enjoyments are best called wild beasts because they do not know truth from falsity. Men who always enjoy a particular thing come to loath it. Is it no different for someone who partakes of worldly pleasures in regard to such joys. The mind mostly pursues unseen objects. Accordingly, the mind of a man who has denied himself sensual gratifications will long for them alone.

Siddhicandra replied with a sweet, respectful, and firm speech,

The exact opposite of what you profess happens these days. In the Age of Perfection and other virtuous times, men who had enjoyed sensual pleasures became renouncers. But in the Age of Destruction, renouncers often themselves partake in worldly delights. In the Age of Perfection people went to dwell in the forest even before their hair turned gray. But for people born in the current Age of Destruction, even when their entire body has gone gray, they still cling to earthly pleasures. These days young people stick to their ascetic vows, but the old break the vows they have taken.

Then glorious Jahangir responded,

I have heard everything you have said, and it is all reasonable. However, you should not be following the path of a sage at this time. Your body appears as fresh and fragrant as the buds of a Champaka tree. Is it acceptable to throw a fire made of chaff on a jasmine bud or to split a lotus stalk with a saw? Would it be desirable to bind leather straps onto a silk dress or to throw soot in one's eyes? Would it be good to violently hammer a glass jug? Would the wise approve of thrusting swords into the center of a plantain tree? Young man! Why do you want to bring sorrows such as plucking out hair by the root on your body, which is as delicate as the stem of a shirisha flower?²⁸ Of the four stages of life, being a householder is the best, because others depend on you for support. You are like an ocean surrounded by rivers. Thus be like my son, marry, and enjoy my ocean of good fortune.

Everybody knows that the essence of this existence is found with fawn-eyed women. Therefore, take a wife as I wish and your life will find fruit in the acquisition of sons. For even villagers revile a tree that does not bear fruit. Begging for food is said to be inferior even to a piece of straw. Are you not ashamed of doing something so unworthy? Your beauty, truth, and constant learning shine in all directions. But these virtues are all cancelled out by your insistence of walking on foot.²⁹ All that is made by the Creator is for our enjoyment. Pursuing that object, we become happy above all. You are full of sorrow in this world. And you will also be full of sorrow in the next world because you are intent on transgressing the path prescribed by God.³⁰

Having heard the sultan's well-reasoned argument, Siddhicandra promptly gave a bold reply,

All that has been laid out by the king is true and good. It would stir the heart of an impassioned man but never the heart of a renouncer.

Hearing the response of this wise man, the king issued a rejoinder that would astonish even great scholars,

Only the minds of men adjudicate between virtue and vice. Without the mind, there is no shirking of duty. Even if something is a sin here, it is to be repelled with good intentions, just as leanness caused by fasting is to be curbed by eating wholesome food. There are rules and exceptions in the duty (*dharma*) of ascetics, and both are to be remembered by all. Therefore it is foolish for everybody to grasp a single viewpoint. The truth of multiple viewpoints (*syadvada*) is to be understood in all things by those who speak of relativism (*syadvada*). For them, endorsing a single view would be called falsity.³¹ O wise one, having abandoned your obstinacy and consenting to my speech, enjoy pleasures as you wish. What wise man would err in his own advice?

After hearing this judicious speech of the shah, who grasped Jain philosophy, Siddhicandra fearlessly replied thinking only of his own obligations,

This advice is fine for a timid man, but a man of conviction does not transgress his obligations one iota, not even with his last breath. After even the smallest transgression, righteousness is eviscerated. Otherwise, how could a tiny thorn render a man lame? A desire for which some purifying act will probably have to be done should be avoided from the start. It is best not to touch mud because you will need to wash it away later. Exceptions are only meant for those who lack the will to walk the path of precepts. But for the strong, there is an exception only for exceptions! Those who have mastered their minds do not adopt multiple viewpoints (*syadvada*) regarding sin. Even those who espouse the theory of relativism (*syadvada*) do not claim its absolute truth. In previous lives I had wives and children. But there was no righteousness in those lives. Therefore, why should I renounce righteousness for such things? All people cherish life, as do I. But I would let life go without hesitation before violating the obligations I have chosen, even a hair.

Then the ministers and others at court began to murmur, saying things such as,

Damn this man's foul stubbornness! Although wise he has brought about grave misfortune for the sake of a trifling matter and become his own worst enemy.

But Siddhicandra stood strong, unperturbed, and paid these remarks no mind. King Jahangir spoke in fury,

Do you dare to show me contempt! Do you not know my power? When angered, I am the God of Death before your eyes, but when happy I am a wishing tree of paradise. Now you will reap what you have sown with your poisonous obstinacy!

Having spoken thus the king, appearing like the God of Death himself, ordered a vicious, malicious elephant to be brought in. The elephant was mad. Like a dark, shining mass, it rained down sheets of fluid. It bared its tusks, appearing like a dark storm cloud with flashes of lightning shining forth. It seemed the totality of the sky, the width of the Vindhya mountain range, and like the teacher of cruelty even for the God of Death. The elephant roared, showing its upturned tusks and conquering all directions. With thrashing limbs it destroyed even the name of everything that is visible. It was a powerful river tearing apart, one by one, turrets on the city walls and tents. As if full of a great violent turn, it raised up from afar. Then, the elephant, its fame sung by bees that were greedy for its rutting juice, was led in by its drivers as commanded. Fearing that mad elephant, other elephants uprooted tree trunks in pride and then dropped them on their roots and rashly ran away. Fleeing horses ran out of breath and attacked each other, rising up in anger to block the road. Even animals do not usually injure those who have fallen in plain sight, and heroes retreat when the weapons have fallen from their hands.

The king said,

Accept the life of a householder and enjoy sensual pleasures with lovely women. Consent to ruling over some land and gain horses and elephants. Obey my command fully, otherwise I will send you as a guest to the God of Death.

Having heard this, Siddhicandra spoke,

This suffering will be difficult. But it will be only for my benefit in accordance with the obligations of duty.

The king angrily responded,

This fool will not come to his senses without harsh attacks and excessive force. Now see the results of your foolish stubbornness!

He then unleashed the fierce elephant that appeared like a large, dark, inauspicious cloud thundering at the end of the age. That raging breast, whom the entire world heard with sounds that filled the sky, seemed as if he would shatter the very directions. Then, having seen that Siddhicandra was undisturbed, the king was astonished and ordered exile to the forest instead of death for disobeying his order. Fearless, Siddhicandra accepted this and left. The glorious shah issued an imperial order to be sent forth everywhere that,

Other renunciants that wander my kingdom are to dwell in the forest because the forest alone is an appropriate residence for ascetics who are free of desires.

The shah, having positively judged the best of expositors, Bhanucandra, who possessed good fortune and countless virtues, kept him at court. Meanwhile Siddhicandra, demonstrating the pure seeds of enlightenment for good people, arrived at the great town of Malpur. According to the request of the local congregation and the entreaties of their leader, Siddhicandra passed the monsoon season there without incident.

One day the glorious sultan was seated in court, feeling joyful. He noticed that Bhanucandra was visibly distressed, as he often was. He called him to come close and inquired affectionately, "What is the cause of this great sorrow that I now see in you, glorious one?" Bhanucandra replied,

By reason of worldly existence, my sorrow is due to the ultimate cause. Nothing else could effect those who are free of desires, feel no attachment, and renounce the world. Nonetheless, O maharaj, I am oppressed now by being separated from my star student who is far away.

Having heard Bhanucandra's words and having remembered Siddhicandra's stubbornness in his own practices, the king thought to himself, "Damn me! Under the sway of confusion I failed to honor his doctrines. Like an owl I had no desire for the sun and instead was a friend to darkness." Dejected by his own error and despondent, but clear-sighted, he issued an imperial order to go forth calling for the return of Siddhicandra. Having received that order, which was like a happy ending for him, Siddhicandra set out from Malpur with the vigor of birds. He entered Agra on foot, accompanied by all sorts of grand festivities. Siddhicandra's fame reached every corner of the earth.

One auspicious day Siddhicandra visited the king. Having seen Siddhicandra, the king lavished praises on him, saying,

You are blessed among the blessed, praiseworthy among those highly praised. In the entire world, who is your equal? You are the single crown jewel of goodness. You are honored among the honored. There is nobody else like you in the world. You have not faltered in your

duty, not at all! O angerless one, forgive my bad action, because among the entire earth, you alone, good one, are virtuous.

Siddhicandra, who had attained fame, spoke to the repentant king with illuminating words that were like moonlight shimmering in the ocean of wisdom,

But you committed no sin, fortunate one! Rather you did me a favor. I was able to destroy bad *karma* on account of your invaluable assistance. If you committed any sin on my account, then please forgive me for causing bad *karma* to accrue to you.

The emperor, overcome by goose bumps and his eyes welling with tears of joy, repeatedly entreated Siddhicandra, “Tell me what to do, and I will act at once!” Hearing the words of the king, Siddhicandra quickly replied,

Let all the sages that were previously exiled from imperial lands return. Let them be pleased and teach as we wish, like before.

Having heard that speech, the king said, “Let it be as you wish.” He then had a written order drawn up and sent. In every village and town, as before, holy men were welcomed by the faithful with grand festivities.

NOTES

1. For overviews of the ‘Ibadat-khana, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar’s Reign, with Special Reference to Abu’l Fazl*, 1556–1605 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), 104–40; Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, “Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology: The Purpose and Location of Akbar’s *Ibadatkhana*,” *Studies in History* 24, no. 2 (2008):195–209.
2. A relatively recently discovered and still little utilized work that discusses several religious discussions under Jahangir is the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*. ‘Abd al-Sattar ibn Qasim Lahawri, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, ed. ‘Arif Nawshahi and Mu‘in Nizami (Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2006).
3. In chronological order: Padmasagara, *Jagadgurukavya*, eds. Hargovinddas and Becardas (Benares: Harakhchand Bhurabhai, 1910), dated 1589; Jayasoma, *Mantrikarmacandra-vamshavaliprabandha* with the commentary of Gunavinaya, ed. Acharya Muni Jinavijaya (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1980), dated 1594; Devavimala, *Hirasaubhagya of Devavimalagani with his own gloss*, ed. Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sivadatta and Kashinath Pandurang Parab (Bombay: Tukaram Javaji, 1900), c. early seventeenth century; Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, ed. Mohanlal Dalichand Desai (Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka Singhi Jain Granthamala, 1941), c. early seventeenth century; Hemavijaya, *Vijayaprashastimahakavya* with the commentary of Gunavijaya (Mumbai: Shri Jinashasan Aradhana Trust, 1988), c. 1632; Vallabha Pathaka, *Vijayadevamahatmya*, ed. Bhikshu Jinavijaya (Ahmedabad: K. P. Modi, 1928), dated 1653.

4. For an overview, see Audrey Truschke, "Jains and the Mughals," *Jainpedia*, November 2012, <http://www.jainpedia.org/themes/places/jainism-and-islam/jains-and-the-mughals.html>.
5. The earliest narration of this event in Sanskrit is Jayasoma, *Mantrikarmacandravamshavaliprabandha*, vv. 359–64. Among the few, brief references in secondary literature is Shridhar Andhare, "Imperial Mughal Tolerance of Jainism and Jain Painting Activity in Gujarat," in *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and Andrew Topsfield (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004), 223–24.
6. Ellison B. Findly, "Jahangir's Vow of Non-Violence," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 2 (1987): 245–56.
7. Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, 1.2.
8. Mohammad Akram Lari Azad, *Religion and Politics in India During the Seventeenth Century*, (New Delhi: Criterion, 1990), 119–20.
9. Shalin Jain, "Piety, Laity and Royalty: Jains Under the Mughals in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century" *Indian Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (2013): 77–90.
10. For example, see Phyllis Granoff, "Jinaprabhasuri and Jinadattasuri: Two Studies from the Śvetāmbara Jain Tradition," in *Speaking of Monks: Religious Biography in India and China*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1992), 36.
11. In Jain thought, karma is a physical substance that adheres to an individual's *jiva*, thereby prompting rebirth and preventing liberation.
12. Audrey Truschke, "Dangerous Debates: Jain Responses to Theological Challenges at the Mughal Court," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 5 (2015): 1311–1344.
13. Inscriptions and texts authored by a Jain group known as the Kharatara Gaccha about interceding in the aftermath of this event confirm that the argument and exile actually occurred, see Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 119. Later vernacular texts also corroborate the episode. Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, "Introduction," in *Bhanucandraganicarita* (Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka-Singhi Jain Granthamala, 1941), 57n88.
14. For example, see Abu al-Faḡl's section on Jainism in Abu al-Faḡl ibn Mubārak, *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867–77), 2:97–111.
15. Abu al-Faḡl, *A'in-i Akbari*, 1:233–35.
16. Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, 4.90, 4.104. *The Kadambari of Banabhatta and his son (Bhushahabhatta) with the commentaries of Bhanuchandra and his disciple Siddhichandra*, ed. Kashinath Pandurang Parab (Bombay: Pandurang Jawaji, 1940), 483, v. 5 of *tika*.
17. Siddhicandra himself notes that Nur Jahan remained confined to the harem just before he represents her as entering the assembly hall in order to join the debate.
18. Truschke, "Dangerous Debates," 14–25.
19. Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, 4.221–358. In my translation, I have frequently added in the names of Siddhicandra and Jahangir for the sake of clarity. In the Sanskrit original, both names are far less frequently mentioned, but it is nearly impossible to lose

- track of who is speaking because Siddhicandra is referred to with the honorific plural, whereas Jahangir merits only the singular.
20. Several of the following verses describing the moonlit night are cited from other Sanskrit texts; several appear in multiple places.
 21. Cited by Vallabhadeva, *Subhasitavali*, ed. Peter Peterson and Durga Prasad Dvivedi (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1886), 342, #2002.
 22. Cited in commentary on 10.36 in Vishvanatha, *Sahityadarpana*, ed. Durgaprasad Dvivedi (New Delhi: Daryaganj, 1982), 532.
 23. This verse is found in several places in Sanskrit; for example, Vidyakara, *Subhashitaratnakosha*, ed. D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 165, v. 9. Also see translation in Daniel H. H. Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry: Vidyakara's Subhasitaratnakosa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 274.
 24. This verse is found in several places in Sanskrit; for example, Vidyakara, *Subhashitaratnakosha*, 164, v. 4. Compare to translation in Ingalls, *Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, 273–74. In Sanskrit poetry, Chakora birds drink moonlight.
 25. Nur Mahal is an alternative name for Nur Jahan.
 26. The following line in Hindavi (Old Hindi) is the only vernacular verse in the *Bhanucandraganicarita* (4.271).
 27. Although Siddhicandra does not give the name of this renunciant king, it appears to be Ibrahim ibn Adham of Balkh.
 28. Jain ascetics pluck out their head hair by the root.
 29. Jain monks typically eat donated food and also walk on foot rather than use animals, carriages, or (today) cars to minimize harm to other living beings.
 30. I translate *ishvara* as God.
 31. In 4.304a, read *syadvada eva sarvatra*.

FURTHER READING

- Andhare, Shridhar. "Imperial Mughal Tolerance of Jainism and Jain Painting Activity in Gujarat." In *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and Andrew Topsfield, 223–33. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004.
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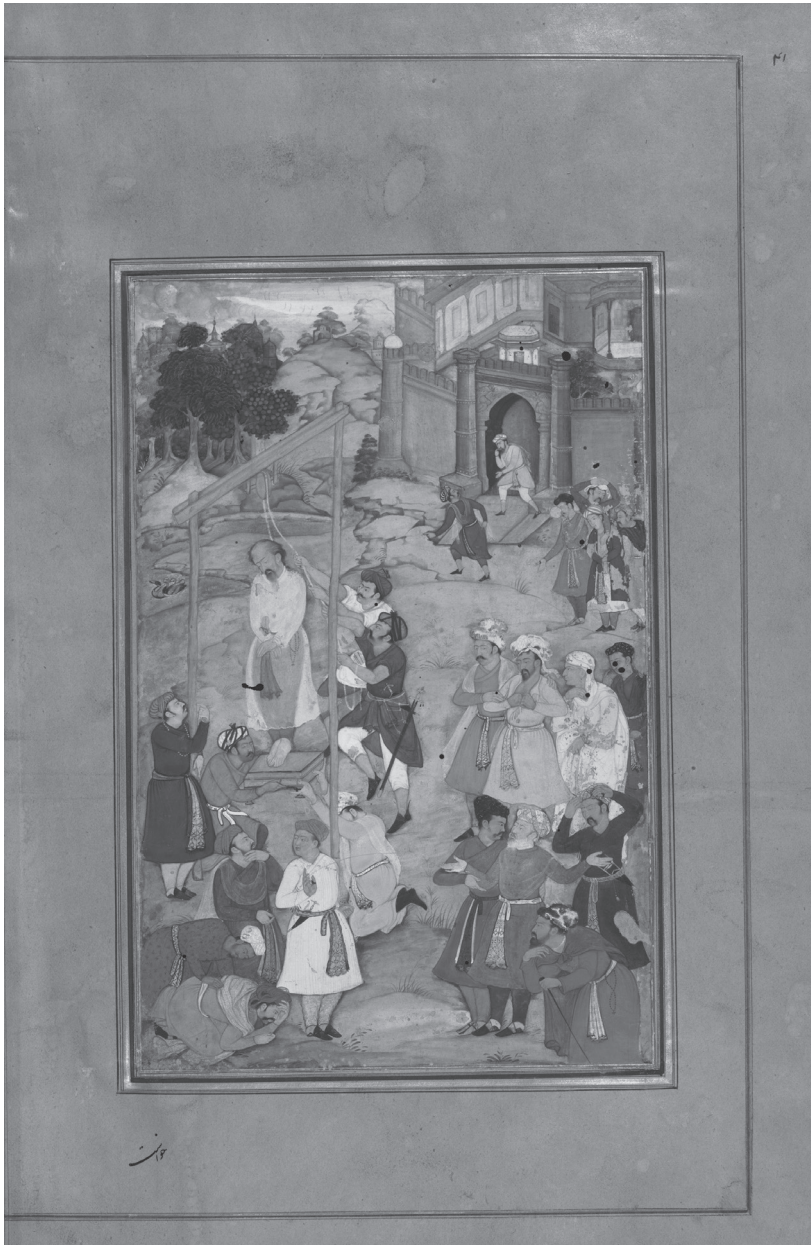


FIGURE 3.1 *The Hanging of Mansur al-Hallaj*

The execution of the infamous Sufi master al-Hallaj in 922 CE Baghdad from an illuminated and illustrated Mughal copy of Hasan Dihlavi's *Divan*. The manuscript was written in *nasta'liq* script by the prominent calligrapher 'Abd Allah Mushkin Qalam in 1602, patronized by Prince Salim, who later became the Mughal emperor Jahangir.

Source: "Divan-i Hasan," Collection of poems (Divan). Walters Ms. W.650, fol. 22B

Author: Najm al-Din Hasan Dihlavi (1253–54, or c. 1338)

Date: 1602

Place of origin: Allahabad, India

Credit: Walters Art Museum

3. The Zealot, the Sufi, and the Quest for Spiritual Transcendence

Since its expansion in the ninth century, Islamic mysticism and its practices have long drawn suspicion from powerful members of the religious and political establishments, once culminating in the brutal public execution of the famed mystic Mansur al-Hallaj in 922 Baghdad (see the Mughal illustration of the event in figure 3.1). Some of the hadith scholars and shari‘a-minded ‘ulama’ of the early modern era inherited this tradition of caution and mistrust and charged the Sufis of their realm with religious deviancy and innovation. This tension had grave consequences for the type of piety a community promoted, condoned, or condemned. In the case of the Safavid house, one of whose sources of social power for its establishment was its Sufi followers, we see that by the early seventeenth century the ‘ulama’ and the state began to heavily persecute Sufi communities, ostensibly the ‘ulama’ were motivated by promoting the true Shi‘i creed and the state by the need for the preservation of its power.

In the first essay, Ata Anzali explores this tension by examining a debate between two members of the Safavid ‘ulama’: Muhammad-Tahir Qummi, a staunch opponent of Sufism, and Majlisi Sr., its defender. The debate was preserved and collected as *A Summary of the Explanation (Mukhtasar al-Tawziḥ)* by the preacher Mir Lawhi who was equally critical of Sufi beliefs, thereby adding a layer of complexity to the source material. The two scholars debated long-held controversies such as the permissibility of music and dance during mystical devotion, God’s love and its correct interpretation when it is manifested during the Sufi state of induced ecstasy, and the mixed legacy of controversial past Sufi masters such as al-Hallaj

and Bayazid Bastami. Qummi, a firm critic, attempts to refute the legitimacy of Sufi piety by relying on an orthodox interpretation of the life and deeds of the Prophet and the Shi'i imams. Majlisi Sr. follows a similar authoritative method in defending the merits of Sufism, but he arrives at an opposite view, throwing into relief the elasticity of textual sources of authority. Qummi, in his rejoinders, even questions the faith of such luminary mystics as Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi and claims that they erred in their beliefs and teachings.

Persecution of Sufis was not confined to the Safavid realm alone. The Ottomans had a long history of suppressing Sufi orders, which they deemed were threatening to the state or to Sunni orthodoxy. This trend became increasingly acute with the rise of the Safavids on their eastern frontier in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In the second essay, Betül Yavuz presents the spiritual worldview of an Ottoman Sufi known by the epithet Hakiki, who belonged to one such persecuted order, the Bayrami-Malami order, through the examination of his treatise *The Book of Guidance* (*Irshad-nama*). Against the backdrop of repression, Hakiki in his book implicitly defends his order by framing it as the inheritor of the teachings of such masters as Rumi, Ibn 'Arabi, and Najm al-Din Razi as he attempts to explain and clarify the Sufi cosmology. He relies on a neoplatonic interpretation of the creation of the Universe, the "Reality of Muhammad" as the basis of all bodies and spirits in the world, and their interconnectedness. Although Hakiki could do little to defend these philosophical views against attacks by some members of the 'ulama', in *The Book of Guidance* he criticized such controversial Sufi practices as poverty, superficiality of outward appearances, and charlatanism of certain Sufi guides in an attempt to reform Ottoman Sufism and render some of its practices socially acceptable at a crucial period of crises and persecution.

Diving deeper into a sea of mystical experience and its challenges, in the third essay, Arthur Buehler examines the inner spiritual journey of one of the most prominent Sufi masters of Mughal India, Ahmad Sirhindi, through the study of his correspondences with his spiritual guide Shaykh Baqibillah during the early seventeenth century. The importance of these letters, known as the *Maktubat* (*Collected Letters*), is confirmed by their far-reaching reception among Sufis worldwide. As Buehler explains, "there is no other published Sufi treatise that goes into such detailed explanations of Sufi practice and how to facilitate postrational experience and ego transformation . . . along with the *Mathnawi* of Jalaluddin Rumi, *Collected Letters* has probably been the most widespread Islamic text (but not the most read because of its extreme difficulty) after the Qur'an."

One of the fundamental issues of mysticism was the possibility of experiencing the presence of the Divine in this life through intense spiritual training and to confirm it experientially. Sirhindi, for instance, with the help of his Sufi guide Baqibillah, at last succeeded in transforming his theoretical knowledge of the "unity-of-being" into an experiential certitude and gained the ability to discern the multiplicity and unity of creation. However, in the process, he noticed that many Sufis

confused their experience of unity-of-being as a direct experience of God—a crucial error—and he made it part of his spiritual mission to demonstrate to his peers and disciples that they were experiencing the shadows of God’s many attributes. With his firm conviction that Sufism without the observance of the divine law and the prophetic hadith would not lead to transcendence, Sirhindi helped shaped the early modern conceptualization of Islamic mysticism. His teachings were so influential that he became known as “the Renewer of the Second Millennium” (*mujaddid-i alf-i thani*). The letters translated below provide a window into Sirhindi’s incredible spiritual journey.

I. Opposition to Sufism in Safavid Iran

A DEBATE BETWEEN MULLA MUHAMMAD-TAHIR QUMMI AND MULLA MUHAMMAD-TAQI MAJLISI

ATA ANZALI

The Safavids rose to power during the latter half of the fifteenth century as leaders of a vast Sufi network. Early rulers of the dynasty capitalized on the charisma implicit in the titles they assumed, titles such as “perfect spiritual leader” (*murshid-i kamil*) and “pole of the earth” (*qutb*). The unwavering loyalty of their zealous disciples, most of whom belonged to the Turkic tribes of Anatolia known as the Qizilbash, was crucial to establishment of the dynasty and to Shah Isma‘il’s (r. 1501–1524) enthronement in Tabriz, the first Sufi king of Persia.

One of the most far-reaching (and perhaps most puzzling) acts of Shah Isma‘il was his declaration of Twelver-Shi‘ism as the official religion of his dynasty. This came at a time when Persia was predominantly Sunni, and Twelver ‘ulama’ were hard to find. To fill this void, ‘ulama’ were encouraged to migrate to Persia from regions with a large Shi‘i population such as Lebanon, where they found an environment hospitable to their educational and missionary activities. In little more than a century, thanks to Safavid support, propaganda, and coercion, most of the population in the Safavid heartlands had converted to Shi‘ism.

As Twelver-Shi‘ism became the dominant mode of piety in Persia, the ‘ulama’ amassed a level of political, economic, social, and cultural capital unprecedented in the history of the sect. Sufism, with its considerable popular appeal, its vast network of lodges (*khanaqahs*), and its association with the Sunni past, was seen as a threat to the emerging hierarchy. By the mid-seventeenth century, a few members of the ‘ulama’ began to attack Sufism publicly. Opposition to their attacks was strong. The Safavid court still derived religious legitimacy from its association with

iconic Sufi figures of the past, including Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili (d. 1334), the purported founder of the Safavid order, even though the association was more symbolic than actual. Moreover, there remained mystically minded and charismatic members of the 'ulama' who supported the Sufi mode of piety, or at least forms of it they considered authentically Shi'i.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, public opinion regarding Sufism began to shift, thanks to the tireless work of the Twelver 'ulama', under whose oversight Shi'ism evolved from a sectarian identity shaped in connection to Sunnism to an independent mode of piety—a world religion with its own charismatic figures, miracle workers, founding myths, rituals of remembrance, religious institutions, and political positions. Although some members of the 'ulama' were deeply invested in their Sufi heritage, others felt it was time for "foreign" elements to be purged from the monumental cultural edifice that had been built on the foundation of the twelve imams.

Prominent religious scholars in the large urban centers of Qom, Isfahan, and Mashhad launched a major campaign against Sufism. Dozens of anti-Sufi treatises were composed, and puritan preachers cursed Sufis publicly from the pulpit. As the campaign gained traction among the 'ulama' and their followers, the political establishment, which had a symbiotic relationship with the religious elite, followed suit. Ironically, two centuries after its inception as a Sufi-led political movement, the Safavid dynasty presided over the remarkable decline of organized Sufism, especially in major urban centers located at the heartlands of the realm.¹

ANTI-SUFI POLEMICS

Mulla Muhammad-Tahir Shirazi Najafi Qummi (d. 1689) was one of the most prominent religious scholars at the forefront of the attacks against Sufism. Biographical sources cite him as an eminent theologian and scholar of hadith. He was born sometime in the early seventeenth century in Fars province to an ordinary household. For unknown reasons, his family moved to the shrine city of Najaf in modern-day Iraq when he was very young. We know nothing else about this important period of his life. Some years later, around 1638, he fled Najaf for Iran, fearing the imminent Ottoman takeover of Iraq and its repercussions.²

Qummi's literary activities seem to have begun soon after he settled in Qom. It is clear from his earliest writings that, as a theologian, he had strong opinions about philosophical and mystical interpretations of Shi'ism, considering it his foremost duty to warn people of the dangers of such readings. His writings paint a picture of an erudite and knowledgeable scholar who was passionate about defending the teachings of the twelve imams, as he understood them.³

It is also clear from his rapid rise to prominence that he had an exceptional talent for navigating the sociopolitical landscape of Safavid Persia. Like many other 'ulama' of the time, he sought to establish close links with the Safavid court, and he

was extraordinarily successful in doing so. He was initially appointed as the Friday prayer leader of Qom, and by 1672, at the latest, he had risen to the position of judge and shaykh al-islam, the highest religious office in a major shrine city.

Qummi began his fight against Sufism long before he became a prominent and politically well-connected scholar. In fact, he initially became famous (or infamous, depending on one's perspective) for his vehement anti-Sufi stance. Sometime before 1650, at a time when public and elite opinion was still favorably inclined toward Sufism, he wrote a short treatise attacking it. Unsurprisingly, according to one source, he did wish for this work to be widely publicized.⁴ The treatise, however, fell into the hands of an unknown proponent of Sufism who may have had a grudge against Qummi. This person brought the treatise to the attention of some of the 'ulama' in the capital at Isfahan, a course of action that landed Qummi in hot water. Qummi's writings attracted the eye of Muhammad-Taqi Majlisi (d. 1659), one of the most charismatic and popular Twelver scholars of the era. Majlisi was a scholar of hadith and a student of the legendary shaykh Baha al-Din Muhammad 'Amili, otherwise known as Shaykh Baha'i (d. 1621), and Majlisi inherited many of the Sufi proclivities of his teacher. He took it upon himself to write a gloss on Qummi's treatise, refuting the latter's arguments against Sufism. Qummi, never one to shy from debate, embraced his role as the underdog and responded to Majlisi's counterarguments in a detailed supergloss. It should be noted that Qummi's treatise and its glosses were all written in Persian as oppose to Arabic, which reveals how the 'ulama' wished to reach a larger audience and shape public opinion on this issue.

The anti-Sufi campaign, in which Qummi played a leading role, reached its peak several decades after this initial debate.⁵ By the early eighteenth century, perceptions of Sufism had changed so dramatically that Majlisi's prominent son, Muhammad-Baqir (d. 1698), was explaining away his father's clear Sufi proclivities by casting them as a strategy to befriend misguided Sufis in hopes of converting them to the true religion.

THE DEBATE AS PRESERVED BY MIR LAWHI

This essay is comprised of a translation of segments of the debate between Qummi and Majlisi Sr. The debate has not survived in its entirety, but we are fortunate to have major portions available in a unique manuscript held at the Mar'ashi Library in Qom.⁶ This manuscript was compiled by a zealot preacher known as Mir Lawhi (d. after 1671), another prominent figure in the anti-Sufi front of the time.⁷ He compiled the original work into twenty-three chapters, each divided into four sections and titled it *An Explanation of the Two Paths and Examination of the Two Schools* (*Tawzih al-Mashrabayn va Tanqih al-Mazhabayn*).⁸ Later, he compiled a shorter version that left out his own analyses. This abridged version is titled *A Summary of the Explanation* (*Mukhtasar al-Tawzih*), or *Essential Portions of the Explanation*

(*Usul Fusul al-Tawzih*), and the chapters in it have only three sections. Only this version of the work survives, portions of which are translated here for the first time.⁹

Finally, in light of Mir Lawhi's strong prejudice against Sufis, it should not be surprising that Qummi emerges from the fray as the more reasoned opponent and the winner of the debate. Despite this bias, the compilation provides valuable insight into the topics that were hotly debated between the pro- and anti-Sufi camps in the final decades of Safavid rule. Furthermore, this compilation is noteworthy in that it contains perspectives from both sides of the debate. The fact that major religious scholars of the time can be found on both sides of the issue demonstrates the complexity of the religious landscape of late Safavid Persia, combating perceptions of the 'ulama' as a monolithic group with a unified understanding of orthodoxy. Majlisi's and Qummi's strikingly divergent views on what constituted a proper understanding of the teachings of the twelve imams is just one example of how the boundaries of Twelver orthodoxy were being contested in this period, even among the 'ulama'.

TRANSLATION

[*Invocation*]

In the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Two Worlds, and His blessings and peace on the best of His creation, Muhammad, and all his descendants.

Chapter 1, Section I

[Qummi says:] . . . I have seen that lack of acquaintance with knowledgeable people has caused many of the Shi'a and friends of 'Ali b. Abu Talib, peace be upon him, to be deceived by monsters on the path of religion. They have strayed far away from the path of law and religion, considering shouting, clapping, jumping, whirling, and love-play with beardless boys to be worship and obedience. Therefore, I saw it as incumbent upon myself to help and guide them and return them to the high road of the Prophetic Shari'a and the 'Alid path.

Chapter 1, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] If the aim of our master [Qummi] is to guide some of the laity, who engage in inappropriate behavior due to their ignorance, that is not bad. But their behavior does not blemish the praiseworthy path of the saints, just as the behavior of ignorant students of religion does not blemish the pursuit of knowledge. It would have been more appropriate for you to first describe the praiseworthy path of the saints, and then engage in disparaging the behavior of those who are not of that path.

First of all, it is possible that some of their movements stem from their vision of God's majesty, or perhaps they lose self-control due to . . . the passion of their love for God, and certain words or deeds rise spontaneously from them. For example, it is said that Junayd¹⁰ raised his hand while in a state of agitation, and when the state subsided, he brought his hand down with the help of the hands of others, so that the act of bringing down his hand would not resemble that of raising it. And even if they inadvertently do something, why do you assume that they consider it a virtue despite the fact that the greatest among them consider it a deficiency? Furthermore, it is not clear that these acts are religiously forbidden; it is merely common opinion [of the jurists]. And God guides toward the straight path.

Chapter 1, Section III

[Qummi responds:] . . . Let it be clear that I was hesitant to write a response to the respected cleric's [Majlisi's] discussions, so I resorted to [Qur'anic] divination (*istikharah*). The divination to write a response was favorable, while the divination not to write one was unfavorable, and thus I decided to respond. . . .

Before commencing with the response, it is fitting for me to outline my views on love (*mahabbat*) and desire (*shawq*), which are necessary for the folk of gnosis (*'irfan*), so that my reason for writing the treatise is made clear to the respected cleric.

Let it be clear that what I believe, and what is evident from the teachings of the Prophetic Household, is that God's servants worship him in three ways. Some worship Him in order to attain paradise, which is the worship of a hired laborer. Others worship Him fearing hellfire, which is the worship of slaves. Still others worship Him out of love and desire, which is the worship of free men.¹¹ The path of the gnostics and those close to God, and the goal of the wise and sagacious in their mortifications and struggles, is to reach this path. Followers of every religion have taken many pains and undergone many mortifications on the path toward reaching this high station, setting off in every direction in search of their goal. However, only those who have followed the Prophetic Household, those guides on the path of love, have reached the final destination. Those who have failed to follow them due to the deception of the monsters on the path of religion have perished in the desert of misguidedness.

This humble servant has gathered many hadith reported by the Prophetic Household on the topic of love and desire. Some time ago I began compiling a book on the subject, which I have titled *Maqamat al-muhibbin*, and which I hope to have the good fortune of finishing. However, the pious worshippers and practitioners of mortification among the Sunnis who oppose the Prophetic Household have issued misguided personal opinions (*ijtihadat*) and reveled in corrupt fantasies as they traverse the valley of divine love, adding misguidedness to deviance, and creating innovations on the path of obedience.

. . . In the treatise, I mentioned signs of Sunni practitioners of mortification who follow Hallaj¹² and Bayazid.¹³ Among the signs that I did not mention is that [members of] this group call themselves '*ashiq* (lit., lover) and attribute '*ishq* (lit, love) to God Almighty. The Household of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, who are the guides on the path of love, have avoided using this term in their supplications and hadith because it is the name of a melancholic illness (*sawdavi*). Rather, they are content to use the terms *mahabbat* (lit., love) and *shawq* (lit., desire), and their followers do the same.¹⁴ The path of love and desire that this humble servant has chosen is the path of the perfect gnostic Shaykh Safi [al-Din Ardabili], as well as that of Shaykh Varram b. Abu Furas, Ibn Tawus, Ahmad b. Fahd Hilli, Mulla Ahmad Ardabili, and other Shi'i gnostics, may God bless them. It should be clear from what I have said that my aim in writing this treatise is not to reject love and desire [for God] as the respected cleric has supposed, unleashing words of derision upon me. . . . How could this humble servant believe such a thing when I have written quatrains like the following?

QUATRAIN

O Lord, capture me with your love.
 Consume my body in the fires of purification.
 Pluck all neglect of God from my wings and feathers,
 That I might fly to the pinnacle of your love.

Moreover, what impelled this humble servant to undertake the writing of the treatise was that when I entered Qom, the city of believers, a group of people told me that some in the town were claiming to have ascended to the heavens, returning with reports of the skies and purporting that a group of jinn had become servants of their Sufi lodge, and many ignorant people had joined them. When I heard those words, my religious zeal was awakened, and I took efforts to refute and destroy them. . . .

Now that my aim in writing this treatise is clear, I will begin my response to what the respected cleric has said, and God is the source of help.

In his gloss on the previous page, the respected cleric says that some of the movements of the saints could be caused by visions of God's majesty, and then he narrates Junayd's story. In no way could the movements we see from the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid be caused by God's love! If that were the case, such behavior would have appeared among the companions of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, and among the companions of the imams, peace be upon them, who are the heralds of the gnostics and lovers, and it would have been recorded by the 'ulama' in their books. The respected cleric should first prove, via Shi'i reporters of hadith, that Junayd was a Muslim and a believer, and then take him as his witness.¹⁵ And God guides whom he wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 2, Section I

[Qummi says:] O Shi'ites and friends of the Prophetic Household! Know that the abovementioned path is the path of the followers of Hallaj, Bayazid, and others like them. Beware of these ways and means, and do not follow this path.

QUATRAIN

Beware of straying from the path of the Shari'a.
Do not step foot on the path of Hallaj.
For all paths outside the bounds of the Shari'a,
Come to an end at the gallows.¹⁶

[QUATRAIN]

If you venture off the path of 'Ali and his descendants,
And fall in line with the followers of Hallaj,
If you wish to be a follower of Bayazid,
You will be resurrected tomorrow with Yazid.¹⁷

Chapter 2, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] How strange that our master [Qummi] identifies the path of the realizers (*muhaqqiqan*) and the unifiers (*muwahhidan*) as that of Hallaj, despite the fact that all the Sufi 'ulama' have disparaged Hallaj, and no one follows him. Instead, all agree that this path is that of the Household of the Messenger of God. Because it is a highly difficult path, however, they [the imams] have not ordered everyone to embark upon it. Instead, they provided guidance on this path to a [select] group among their apostles and close acquaintances, compelling them [to follow it], for it is not hidden from the insightful and knowledgeable. Only some, however, bore this heavy burden and attained eternal felicity (*sa'adat*), like Rashid Hijri, Kumayl b. Ziyad Nakha'i, Qanbar, Salman, Jabir Ju'fi, and other companions privy to the secrets of the guiding imams. The exoteric 'ulama' called into question the character and integrity of these people because they could not comprehend their status, though it is not hidden from those who search. And God guides whom he wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 2, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric expresses surprise that I identified the path of saints with that of Hallaj, and he further claims that all the Sufi 'ulama' have disparaged Hallaj. It is apparent from such statements that the cleric has not read the books of this group, not even *Miftah al-Falah*,¹⁸ nor has he heard Shaykh Shabistari¹⁹ say in *Gulshan* [Raz]:

If it is permitted for a tree to say, "I am God,"
 Why is it not permitted for the good-fortuned one [that is, Hallaj]?²⁰

This book, *Gulshan*, is highly regarded by these people, so much so that Lahiji,²¹ one of their great scholars, wrote a commentary on it. In addition, Rumi, who is a prominent member of this group and whom you [Majlisi] consider to be your spiritual master, alluded to the greatness of Hallaj. . . . If you do your research, you will know with certainty that these people whom you emulate are all followers of Hallaj.

[The cleric] has also said that this path was taught by the blessed Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, and by his descendants, peace be upon them, to Rashid Hijri, Kumayl [b.] Ziyad, Qanbar, Salman, and Jabir Ju'fi. The respected cleric may deceive the laity with such statements, but when would they ever deceive those who have read the biographical literature (*rijaʿ*)?²² It is incumbent upon the respected cleric to inform us which of the words and deeds of this group, who are followers of the Household, are in accordance with the words or deeds of the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid. . . . If the path of the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid is correct, and if it is taken from the teachings of the Household, then it must be the case that the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid trace their path back to these few holders of the secrets of the Household. On the contrary, however, we see that the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid do not trace their path back to such people. The names of Jabir, Rashid, Kumayl, Qanbar, and Salman are not known among them and are not mentioned in their books.

Chapter 4, Section I

[Qummi says:] . . . It is reported in the book *Tazkirat al-Awliya'* that one day a disciple of Bayazid said, "It is mentioned in a report from the blessed Messenger of God, may God bless him and his descendants, that [the Prophet said], 'on the day of resurrection, God, almighty and exalted is He, will kindly bestow upon me the flag of praise, and under that divine flag all the believers will gather.'" The above-mentioned shaykh [Bayazid] replied, "By God, my flag is greater than the flag of Muhammad, may God bless him and his descendants."

God's curse be on he who spoke those words!

It is also reported that someone asked Bayazid, "Why don't you pray the night prayers?" He replied, "I don't have time for prayers, I hover in the heavenly realm, and wherever I find a fallen one, I take his hand." He also said, "I saw God in my dream. He asked me, 'what do you want, Bayazid?' I responded, 'I want what you want.' He said, 'I am for you as you are for me.'" ²³

. . .

O Muslims! Consider these statements and be mindful of your own fate. Don't follow these destroyers of God's religion.

Chapter 4, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] I have mentioned that accusations leveled by ignorant people against the divine ‘ulama’ are not worthy of being heard, so it is not in accordance with the shari’a to pay attention to such statements. Furthermore, ‘Allamah Hilli, may God bless him, reported in his commentary on *Tajrid* that Bayazid was the water bearer of the blessed Imam Ja’far Sadiq, may God bless him.²⁴ Because it is relevant, [I will relate] a story that I heard from my mentor, Shaykh Baha’ al-Din Muhammad, may God bless him. He said, “I was with the late king, Shah ‘Abbas, and we visited the *imamzadah* in Bistam.²⁵ After that visit, we decided to pay a visit to the tomb of Bayazid. A Shirazi scholar was with us. ‘Why are we visiting the tomb of this Sunni?’ that scholar objected . . . saying that Bayazid was the cause of the *imamzadah*’s death. I replied, ‘O my king! ‘Allamah Hilli has reported in his commentary on *Tajrid* that he [Bayazid] was the water bearer at the home of Imam Ja’far Sadiq, peace be upon him, and because he did that duty for a prolonged time and the blessed [imam] considered him capable of guiding the populace due to the mortifications and struggles that he underwent during the length of his service, he released him from his service and entrusted him to take his son with him to Bistam. Eventually the people of Bistam quarreled over where the *imamzadah* should settle in their town, and this led to a fight. A stray stone hit the *imamzadah*, and he was martyred. It is not even clear if the people of Bistam are to blame for this, because what happened, happened because of their love.’”

Other stories were also related about Bayazid’s virtues that are too long for this gloss. After those stories, [Shaykh Baha’i remarked], “I took the king to pay a visit to Bayazid’s tomb. As luck would have it, there on the gravestone was Rumi’s *Masnavi*. I said, ‘My king, let’s inquire about Bayazid’s status from Rumi’s *divan*.’ As we opened the book, the first line in the page we opened was:

Outwardly, you accuse Bayazid,
But inwardly, you would shame even Yazid.

After that, the king asked me to recite the *ziyarat* for him, and I did.”²⁶

In summary, if someone appears to be included among the righteous, it is against the shari’a to repeat the gossip of unknown people and cause him to be cursed. Even if such statements were made by this person, they are subject to interpretation, just as Shaykh Ruzbihan of Fars has done in his book, *Sharh-i Ta’vilat* [sic] in which he reports such statements made by Sufis.²⁷ In most cases, these were expressed in the madness of love. Therefore, leaving aside other possible interpretations that are too long for this gloss, in accordance with reports and hadiths, it is obligatory to attribute [problematic] statements by the believers to precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) or other proper interpretations whenever possible.²⁸ [Furthermore,] if a group of people had faith in Bayazid, thinking that he was a servant of the blessed [imam] and that he was a Shi’i, they would be rewarded even if, in

reality, Bayazid was a cursed Sunni. This is especially true for the times of dissimulation, when they had to conceal their [religious] inclinations. How is it in accordance with the shari‘a to curse such people? . . .

Chapter 4, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric, while praising the status of Bayazid, mentions that ‘Allamah Hilli, may God bless him, has said that Bayazid was the water bearer of the blessed Imam Ja‘far Sadiq. How strange that the respected cleric does not understand that being a water bearer does not make someone virtuous. Has he not heard of ‘Aisha,²⁹ Hafsa,³⁰ Noah’s son,³¹ and Ja‘far the Liar?³² . . .

He then narrates popular stories attributed to the Shaykh [Baha’i], may God bless him. . . . Doesn’t he know that prognostication (*fal*) means to seek knowledge of the unseen, and to seek the unseen from Rumi’s book or other books, without the permission of God, the Messenger, and the imams, peace be upon them all, is not allowed? . . . As for divination (*istikharah*), we do that because the Household, peace be upon them, have permitted and taught it. Divination is different from prognostication, as is clear to any intelligent, insightful person. And God guides whom he wishes to the straight path.

. . . . The point made about their time being the time of dissimulation is true. Yet even during the time of dissimulation, the Shi‘i ‘ulama’ and luminaries cannot practice dissimulation in a way that Sunnis recognize them as saints while they remain unknown to the Shi‘ites.

Chapter 5, Section I

[Qummi says:] The author of *Tabsirat al-‘Avam* divides the followers of Hallaj into six groups and reports many of their heresies.³³ In addition, he says in that book that Sunnis recognize this group [the Sufis] as saints and miracle workers. There is much evidence of the truthfulness of what this knowledgeable man has said. First, the Shi‘i ‘ulama’ of the past wrote books in which they gathered the names of [prominent] Shi‘ites and lovers of the household. In these books, they did not mention the name of any [prominent] Shi‘ite who was a denizen of a Sufi lodge, who engaged in ecstasy, *sama’* dancing, howling, or love-play, or who was said to have subscribed to a belief associated with the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid. This is evidence that this path has never been known among the Shi‘ites. If it had been, they would have said so. Rather, this path has always belonged to the Sunnis. Sunni kings of all ages respected them [the Sufis] and built lodges for them. Second, a handful of towns are known to be centers of Shi‘ism, such as Astarabad, Sabzavar, Jabal ‘Amil, Hilla, and Qom, the city of believers. None of these towns contains an ancient Sufi lodge, even though in Qom there are many ancient domes. In Sunni towns, however, there are several ancient lodges. This is evidence that this path was not known among the Shi‘ites.

Chapter 5, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] The fact that there have been many Sunni Sufis is no cause for dismay. There have been many destroyers of knowledge and the ‘ulama’, but this does not blemish Sufism or knowledge. As for the fact that there was no Sufi lodge during the time of the imams; there were no madrasas then either! If these are innovations, they are either permissible (*mubah*) or praiseworthy (*mustahabb*) innovations, as the martyred shaykh,³⁴ may God bless him, has mentioned in his *Qava’id*. As for retreats and seclusions, they are desirable for their role in reforming the soul that is susceptible to temptation (*nafs-i ammarah*). If a group of people, especially seekers of knowledge, decide to undertake retreat and seclusion and engage in a struggle against their carnal soul with the aim of purifying their soul from the illnesses that surround the people of the world, this is the greater jihad and would not be reprehensible. Instead, it is the most important obligatory duty.

Chapter 5, Section III

[Qummi responds:] . . . It is true, as the respected cleric says, that seclusion aimed at struggling against the carnal soul is not reprehensible, but only on the condition that it does not involve abandoning the traditions of the blessed Refuge of Prophecy, may God’s blessing be upon him and his descendants, such as communal prayers in the mosque or attending to the needs of other believers. The forty-day retreat customary among the followers of Hallaj, however, causes many of the traditions of the blessed Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, to be abandoned. Furthermore, it damages the brain and causes melancholia. Therefore, it should be avoided, and the path of the Household should be taken up in its stead. . . .

Chapter 8, Section I

[Qummi says:] An ignorant person might say that the path and beliefs of this group [the Sufis] are the religion of the Messenger and the Household, peace be upon them, but that they [the latter] did not share them with everyone because they were secrets, and thus they did not become widely known among the Shi’ites. In response, I would say that anyone with the slightest shred of intelligence knows that if this were the path of truth that held the secrets of the sect, these secrets would have been withheld from the Sunnis. Our imams, who are the Household of the Messenger, would have not taught such secrets to non-Shi’ites. But on the contrary, we find that this path is famous among the Sunnis and those foreign to the Household, while at the same time, the friends of the Household and the Shi’i ‘ulama’ are ignorant of it. Thus it is clear that what the ignorant person has said is false and a lie.

Chapter 8, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] The correct belief is that the Sunnis do not share in this path, and that all who have shared in it have been Shi'ites, including Ibrahim Adham,³⁵ Bayazid Bistami, Sana'i,³⁶ Rumi, 'Attar,³⁷ and others. They have also disparaged Sunni Sufis in their books, as is clear to the insightful person. And God guides whom He wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 8, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric is bold to make such unsubstantiated claims. If you make a claim, you should furnish evidence for it and stop acting like a layperson. And God guides whom He wishes to the straight path.

Chapter 16, Section I

[Qummi says:] Additional evidence [of their misguidedness] is that it is reported that their spiritual masters, Rumi and others, would bring reed flutes and other instruments to their sessions. This is said even now about the Mawlawi House in Baghdad. Such things are forbidden in the school of our imams. It is strange that some of the Shi'i people have complete faith in Rumi despite the fact that he was an Uzbek and, as it is reported, a Sunni judge. Sunnis have a firm belief in him and consider him their exemplar and respect his poetry enormously because they consider him a Sunni and do not see anything in his poetry that indicates he was a Shi'ite. It appears that some among the Shi'ites, due to Rumi's great praise for the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, have thought that he was a Shi'ite, forgetting that this is not evidence of Shi'ism. In fact, the Sunnis known as the *tafzili* have written many books about the virtues of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, peace be upon him, and the rest of the imams.³⁸ They love them very much and consider 'Ali b. Abi Talib to be most virtuous. At the same time, however, they love Abu Bakr and 'Umar and consider them their caliphs. . . .

Chapter 16, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] It was noted above that what is commonly said by laypeople cannot be trusted. If Sunnis, according to their own belief, consider a Shi'ite to be a Sunni, that does not make that Shi'ite a Sunni. For example, Sunnis consider Muhammad b. Ya'qub Kulayni, who was among the greatest hadith scholars of Shi'ism, to be a Sunni, and they visit his grave, which is adjacent to the Mawlawi House in Baghdad.³⁹ In fact, they consider all of our Imams to be Sunnis, and they have faith in them and visit their tombs. If some Sunnis believe that various instruments are permissible or carry out reprehensible acts and tell lies about the Messenger of God to the effect that he listened to instruments and held 'Aisha on his

shoulder to see them being played, then why should it be surprising that they tell lies about Rumi? The respected Rumi has expressed his devotion to the infallible imams, may God bless them all, in many of his odes, rejecting any association with their enemies and making his true religion clear. If, due to dissimulation, he praised some of the damned, he followed it immediately with lines like this:

I tell you a myth, be it false or true,
That it might highlight the truth.

Chapter 16, Section III

[Qummi responds:] The respected cleric has erred tremendously here, because none of the Sunnis consider Muhammad b. Ya‘qub Kulayni to be a Sunni. Rather, they know him as a propagator of the religion of Shi‘ism. . . . As for the claim that [Rumi] has mentioned the twelve imams in some of his odes, if that is true, it was noted above that merely mentioning the twelve imams and expressing friendship with them is not evidence of Shi‘ism. Rather, a Shi‘ite is someone who is well-known as such among the Shi‘ites, or who has disparaged the usurpers of the rights of the Household.

Chapter 17, Section I

[Qummi says:] Another issue with the misguided one [Rumi] is that he was a disciple of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din, and the latter is first and foremost among the damned.⁴⁰ Further evidence [of their misguidedness] is that this group believes in determinism, and this is contrary to Shi‘ism. Some ignorant people have complete faith in Mahmud Shabistari despite the fact that he says in his *Gulshan* [Raz]:

Whoever chooses a religion other than determinism,
Is said by the Prophet to be a Zoroastrian.

This couplet indicates that Shi‘ites are Zoroastrians because they do not believe in determinism. On the contrary, determinism is the belief of Sunnis, because they say whatever a servant of God does is caused by God, and that the servant has no choice in it.

In *Favatih*, [the author says that] Shaykh Muhyi al-Din has indicated that all the Sufis follow the school of determinism.⁴¹ It is truly surprising that some people, despite all their boasting about their Shi‘ism, have utmost faith in Shaykh Muhyi al-Din. This man has said things in *Futuhat* that cannot be reconciled with Islam. . . . In *Favatih* it is narrated that in chapter seventy-three of *Futuhat* this wretched man said, “Two pious men of the Shafi‘i School of law, whom no one suspected of Shi‘ism, were in the company of a Rajabi saint whom I had met before in

Diyar Bekir.⁴² The latter said, 'I see you in the form of pigs, and this is a sign between me and my God, for he reveals the Shi'ites to me in such a form.'⁴³ They repented in their heart of being Shi'ites. 'Now that you have repented,' he said, 'I see you in the form of humans.' They confessed [that they had indeed been Shi'ites] and were very surprised by this experience."⁴⁴

O friends, do you see how much enmity this leader of the wretched has toward the friends of the Household? How could one consider him a Muslim?

It is also narrated in *Favatih* that he said, "Sainthood has been sealed with me," and the commentator on the book *Fusus* narrated that, "Shaykh Muhyi al-Din went on a nine-month retreat and did not eat anything. Then, he was ordered to come out and was given the good news that he was the Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood. . . ."⁴⁵

Chapter 17, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] . . . It is not known whether Shaykh Muhyi al-Din was evil, but signs of his Shi'ism are apparent in his *Futuhāt*. In his treatise titled *Inshā' al-Dava'ir*, he has explicitly confirmed the truth of the sect of Shi'ism. There, in several chapters, he elaborates on the prophetic hadith "my community will be divided . . .".⁴⁶ And then he says that the true religion is the religion of the twelve imams, and he described his revelations, saying, "In the realm of revelation, I saw the names of each of the infallible imams written on different portions of the holy quarters (*haza'ir al-quds*)."⁴⁷ Finally, it is not farfetched to say that he praised some of the damned due to dissimulation.

In short, the knowledgeable man who has the capacity to understand the statements of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din will know the degree of his virtues and his status. For example, our master Jalal [al-Din] Davani in *Sharh Risalah-yi Zawra'* went out of his way to praise him. Our master Shams al-Din Khafri,⁴⁷ Shaykh Baha' al-Din, and Maulana Sadr al-Din Muhammad Shirazi⁴⁸ did similarly. Rather, all the realizers (*muhaqqiqin*) and meticulous researchers (*mudaqqiqin*) followed his footsteps.

Also, given that "to a believer, wisdom is [like something precious] that is lost," and that [we are to] "look at what someone says, and not who says it,"⁴⁹ no one should be deprived of his [Shaykh Muhyi al-Din's] words of wisdom. If their intellect is unable to understand some of them, they should attribute that to shortcomings in their own understanding. If he narrates some senseless thing that a group of people said on the topic of religion, it should be attributed to dissimulation so that people can benefit from the light that overflows from him. Furthermore, these discussions are not suitable for the laity, and the consensus of this group [the Sufis] is that laypersons should not be allowed to read their books. Similarly, it is not permissible for them [the laity] to read the books of philosophers. Only those who have extensive knowledge can benefit from the writings of this group, for "man is the enemy of what he does not know."

Chapter 18, Section I

[Qummi says:] It is mentioned in *Favatih* that in his commentary on *Fusus*, Jandi⁵⁰ narrates that Shaykh Sadr al-Din⁵¹ heard this liar (*khazzab*) of a shaykh [Ibn ‘Arabi] say, “When I reached the Mediterranean Sea from al-Andulus, I decided to board a ship. Suddenly, all the details of my inner and outer states up to the end of my life were revealed to me. After intense concentration and complete meditation, all of your states from birth until death, and after death in *barzakh*,⁵² as well as those of your father and your followers,⁵³ were made clear [to me].”⁵⁴

O Shi‘ites and friends of the Household! See how these apostate irreligious people spread lies and destroy the religion of the Messenger? It is fitting that you rend your collars and cry tears of blood in mourning for religion. . . . It is ironic that a group of ignorant people who know nothing of their religious obligations wish to inform us about heavens. In Kulayni’s book, he narrates a hadith report [to the effect] that the sign of a liar is that he brings news about heaven and earth and east and the west, but when asked about what is forbidden (*haram*) and what is permissible (*halal*), he does not know.⁵⁵

Chapter 18, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] If our respected master [Qummi], were cognizant of his own state, he would surely rend his own stomach, let alone his collar! I swear to God that I have no bias in favor of Shaykh Muhyi al-Din or others, but our master does not differentiate between concern for religion and concern for [his own] ego. If he better examined his own state, he would engage in reforming his soul. Why is it so impossible to believe that someone, through extensive struggle and mortification, could acquire knowledge of the states of himself or others? It has repeatedly been reported that the infidels of India gain purity of soul as a result of mortification, and hadiths also report this. So if a pious believer receives heavenly and earthly revelations as a result of self-mortification and struggle, by God it is true! Many great revelations happened to this servant [of God, that is, Majlisi] and many of the servants who were with me.

If our master is concerned with religion, he should engage for a while in mortifications, and if it avails him nothing, then he can write ten more books refuting this group. Unfortunately, love of position and prestige gets in his way. When [mental] illnesses become chronic, extensive mortification is especially needed to rid oneself of such deadly traits so that the light of divine manifestation, and divine majesty and beauty, make themselves known. Finally, all these stupid things that the Sunni [author of *Favatih*] has reported from some of Ibn ‘Arabi’s books, even if they are true, should be attributed to dissimulation. . . . Shaykh Muhyi al-Din’s time in Egypt was a prime time for dissimulation, because it was the period when Abbasid caliphs overcame the Isma‘ilis and more than one hundred thousand Shi‘ites were killed. If you and I had lived in such times, we would have dissimulated far more!

Chapter 18, Section III

[Qummi responds:] Let it be clear to the respected cleric that my lifestyle is comprised of following the Household of the Messenger and their hadiths. It appears that this lifestyle does not sound appealing to the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid. Oh, Refuge of Justice (*'idalat-panaha*)! Why do you use these rude and unpleasant words? Are you not ashamed before God? How can someone who has reformed his ego in such a manner [that is, who says such rude things] give advice to others? Besides, I mentioned that Muhyi al-Din numbers among the destroyers of religion, and thus finding a valid interpretation of his false statements only results in destruction to religion. Are you not ashamed before God for thinking so highly of this lost and misguided person? The blessed Master of Prophets needed Gabriel to come down to inform him about the past and the future, and the blessed Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, depended upon the Prophet to teach and inform him. . . . It follows that the respected cleric considers this wretched person more perfect than prophets. Even more surprising is the attribution of revelation to the infidels of India, even though the consensus of Muslims is that receiving news of the unseen is a miracle of the prophets and their successors. That is what the Qur'an says, that God Almighty does not inform anyone of the unseen except for prophets: "Knower of the unseen, he does not reveal His unseen to anyone except a messenger of His choosing."⁵⁶

Regarding the respected cleric's claim of [receiving] revelations, it appears that this does not happen without causing damage to the brain. It seems that such revelations happen after the mortifications common among the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid, because their brains are damaged and the initial stages of melancholia kick in. Then they close their eyes and imagine another realm. They undertake journeys in that realm of imagination, and whatever they see they believe to be true. If this were the path of truth, the Household of the Prophet, may God bless him and his descendants, would have taught it to their companions.

Also, you have claimed that I love prestige and position. Can you tell me how you ascertained this? If it is among the things that have been revealed to you, beware of trusting your revelations, for they are the opposite of the truth. In fact, if love of position had overtaken my soul, I would have refrained from talking about Hallaj and Bayazid to avoid the entire world entering into debate with me, because the majority of the laity are deceived by these people and infatuated with love for them.

Chapter 22, Section I

[Qummi says:] You should also know that this group, when they ostensibly achieve perfection, consider evil and good and faith and unbelief to be the same. That is why Rumi called the pharaoh Moses:

When the colorless fell captive to color,
One Moses went to battle against another Moses.

Anyone who gives this any thought would certainly conclude that this school is something other than the school of Shi'ism.

Another argument is that they consider love-play with girls and boys to be a virtue and a means of unification with God Almighty. In *Favatih*, love-play has been attributed to the masters of this group, like Najm Kubra⁵⁷ and Shaykh Ruzbihan.⁵⁸ However, in the school of our imams, it is known that love for this world and being attached to anyone other than God Almighty are condemned.

Moreover, this group of people has no interest in mosques, communal prayers, or other traditions of the Messenger, may God bless him and his descendants. Instead, much of the time they ruin their prayers by offering them in a Sufi lodge. The way of our imams is known to be contrary to this. It is reported that the prayers of one who lives near a mosque and performs his prayers at home will not be accepted.⁵⁹

Chapter 22, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] . . . If what you have said about love-play being the religion of this group is in reference to the laity, and the laity who seek knowledge are included in this group, then the behavior of the laity cannot be considered evidence. If you mean the elite, then they consider loving nothing but God to be infidelity. And if a Sunni reports an accusation about a group of people without legal (*shari*) proof, it is not permissible to quote him . . .

Chapter 23, Section I

[Qummi says:] . . . Dear ones, it appears that some have been deceived by this group because they have waxed eloquent about piety and asceticism in their books and explained how to struggle against the carnal soul and offered remedies for each of the illnesses of the soul. They think this is what Sufism is, and they know nothing of their false beliefs, and they do not realize that there are some in every religion who engage in self-mortification and struggle against the carnal soul, especially among the Christians, including the Franks (*farangi*) and Armenians.

Another argument for the falseness of this group's path is that they believe in Oneness of Being (*vahdat-i vujud*). That is, they think nothing exists but God, and that whatever exists is identical to God. They use the metaphor of the sea and the waves; God is like the sea, and all creatures are like the waves of the sea. Though each wave appears in our imagination as something other than from the sea, in reality it is identical with it. What we know of the path of our imams, peace be upon them, indicates the falseness of this statement.

It seems that the followers of Hallaj have learned this belief from the Christians. I heard that some Armenian ascetics are said to have said, "In our religion, Oneness of Being is similar to [the beliefs of] your hermits (*ghushah-nashinan*)."⁶⁰ Also, I heard some Frank ascetics of Baghdad express beliefs that were identical to the beliefs of this group.

Chapter 23, Section II

[Majlisi responds:] There is no doubt that the monsters on the path are many, and it is necessary for everyone to stay far from their sayings and deeds. Such monsters have always been there, on both sides of the path [that is, on the Sufi path and the path of the jurists]. It is incumbent upon the disciple of God Almighty to follow a person whose appearance is adorned with the light of the shari'a and whose soul is purified internally from wickedness, someone clothed inwardly and outwardly with the ways of the Household who does not consider himself safe from the deceptions of the carnal soul. Such people are extremely rare in our time. As [the hadith says], "my saints are under my cloak; no one knows them except for me." Furthermore, it is not permissible for the laity to read most books by Sufis, because some of them were Sunnis, and thus Sunni and Shi'i are mixed up together; this in addition to the fact that the Shi'is practiced dissimulation. It is therefore incumbent upon all to seek religious knowledge from the divine 'ulama'. After acquiring this knowledge, [they may] turn to the purification of their soul via mortifications and struggles under a perfect spiritual master. They must also avoid making statements about Oneness of Being and the like, because such statements are, on their surface, equivalent to disbelief and apostasy. They have very nuanced and precise meanings that not everyone can comprehend—so much so that it is not clear whether even the knowledgeable 'ulama' who believed in it, like Mawlana Jalal [al-Din Davani], Mawlana Shams al-Din Muhammad Khafri, and others, in fact understood it. This is because understanding such meanings is beyond the reach of reason. Until the unveiling light is acquired after much mortification and struggle, one cannot hope to receive a glimpse of it. Shaykh Baha' al-Din Muhammad, may God bless him, . . . said, "One day, a virtuous person in town named Mawlana Khajah Jan came to me and said, 'Last night I pondered extensively until I understood the meaning of the Oneness of Being.' I replied, 'Who is your spiritual master (*pir*)?' He responded, 'What does that word mean?' I asked, 'How many mortifications have you undergone?' 'None,' he answered. 'Clearly,' I said, 'the meaning that you have understood is different than that which the Sufis have in mind, because they all agree that the meaning of Oneness of Being can only be revealed to someone who has served under a perfect master and undergone mortifications for forty years. It is clear that what you have understood, without a spiritual master and without mortifications, is different from what Sufis say. Please do not tell others about this so as not to cause complications.' "

Chapter 23, Section III

[Qummi responds:] This is a discussion that the respected cleric has already had, and the response is that it is true that the 'ulama' can be divided into two groups. One group is beautified with the adornment of shari'a; these are the guides of religion and the trusted people of the Lord of the Two Worlds. The other group has

been infected by their love for this world and follows their tempting soul; they are the destroyers of religion. As for the followers of Hallaj and Bayazid, they are all monsters on the path. May God Almighty protect the followers of the Household from the evils of this group!

NOTES

1. Several scholars, including myself, have discussed this shift in detail in other works. For more information, see the Further Reading section at the end of the essay.
2. For a more detailed account of Qummi's life and works, see Anzali and Gerami, *Opposition to Philosophy*, 15–33.
3. See, Anzali and Gerami, *Opposition to Philosophy*, 25–43.
4. Mir Muhammad Lawhi, "Kifayat al-Muhtadi," Manuscript No. 1154 (Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Markazi va Markaz-i Asnad-i Danishgah-i Tehran, 1083h. [1672–73]), f. 187a.
5. For a detailed and in depth analysis of the anti-Sufi campaign of the mid-seventeenth century in Safavid Iran, see Ata Anzali, *'Mysticism' in Iran: the Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 24–117.
6. An edition of the original Persian manuscript was recently published in Iran by Rasul Ja'fariyan. I have used this edition for my translation. Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Safaviyyah dar 'Arsah-yi Din, Farhang va Siyasat* (Qom, Iran: Pizhuhishkadeh-i Hawzah va Danishgah, 2000), vol. 2: 605–658.
7. For more on Mir Lawhi see Anzali, *'Mysticism' in Iran*, 42–45.
8. The first section of each chapter is comprised of a paragraph from the original treatise written by Qummi. The second section contains Majlisi's gloss and refutation of the preceding paragraph. The third section contains Qummi's response to Majlisi's arguments (the supergloss). Finally, the fourth section is dedicated to Mir Lawhi's own extensive evaluation of the arguments offered by the two scholars.
9. Neither Mir Lawhi nor Qummi's name is mentioned anywhere in the treatise. Given the tenuous position of the anti-Sufi front at this early stage, this should come as no surprise. In fact, Mir Lawhi wrote several other anti-Sufi treatises pseudonymously.
10. Abu al-Qasim b. Muhammad, otherwise known as Junayd Baghdadi (d. 910), was a prominent figure in early Sufism. He is often characterized as a pioneer of the "sober" tradition of Sufism in contrast to Bayazid, who is often characterized as an early leader in the "ecstatic" tradition.
11. For one version of this hadith see: Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1: 84.
12. Husayn b. Mansur Hallaj (d. 922), was a famous early Sufi of Persian origins who was eventually crucified in Baghdad on charges of heresy, ostensibly for his antinomian behavior, one of his famous utterances was, "I am the Truth."
13. Abu Yazid Bistami (d. 874), also known as Bayazid, was a prominent early Sufi of Persian origins. He was known as an ecstatic figure and many such utterances are attributed to him, including his famous line, "Glory be to me! How exalted is my state!"
14. Qummi's major objection here is not against the concept of divine love per se, as he is at pains to clarify in a number of places throughout his gloss. Rather, he objects to

the use of a term (*'ishq*) to refer to it that has not been used in the canon. He argues that terms such as *mahabbat*, which are actually found in the Qur'an, should be used instead.

15. That is, because a Sunni's testimony would not be acceptable.
16. Hallaj is said to have been executed on the gallows.
17. Yazid b. Mu'aviya (d. 683), the second Umayyad Caliph, massacred Husayn b. 'Ali (the grandson of Muhammad) and many members of his family and his friends in Karbala in 680.
18. This is a reference to the widely read work of the Egyptian Sufi, Ibn 'Ata'-Allah Iskan-dari (d. 1309). The full title of the book, which is on the subject of Sufi practices of remembrance of God (*zikr*), is *Miftah al-Falah va Misbah al-Arvah*.
19. Mahmud Shabistari (d. 1340).
20. The first hemistich is a reference to the burning bush that Moses encountered on Mt. Sinai. According to the Qur'an (20:12), as Moses approached the bush, a voice came from its direction, saying to Moses, "Truly, I am your Lord."
21. Shaykh Muhammad Lahiji, d. 1506.
22. The term *rijal* refers to an Islamic discipline developed for critical evaluation of the trustworthiness of hadith transmitters based on their personal integrity and faith, among other factors.
23. See 'Attar, *Tadhkiratu'l-Awliya*, 171.
24. See Hasan b. Yusuf Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I'tiqad* (Beirut: A'lami, 1978), 422.
25. *Imamzadah* refers to the generations of descendants of Muhammad through 'Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin. These descendants were, and continue to be, held in high regard, and many shrines are built at their gravesites across the Muslim world.
26. *Ziayrat* is a specific supplication recommended for recitation when visiting a shrine.
27. A reference to the well-known work by Ruzbihan (d. 1209), *Sharh-i Shathiyyat*.
28. *Taqiyyah*, or precautionary dissimulation, is a practice sanctioned by the Shi'i imams that allowed their followers to keep their sectarian identity secret if they felt their lives were in danger, even if it involved lying or cooperating with Sunni leaders.
29. The daughter of Abu Bakr (the first caliph, d. 634) and one of the wives of Muhammad, 'Aisha (d. 678) is widely reviled in Shi'i tradition, not least because she took up arms against 'Ali in the Battle of Camel.
30. Hafsa (d. 665) was the daughter of the second caliph, 'Umar (d. 644), and one of the wives of Muhammad.
31. According to the Qur'an (11:42–43), Noah had an unnamed son who refused to come aboard the ark and later drowned in the flood.
32. Ja'far b. 'Ali (d. 884) was the son of the tenth Shi'i imam. His claim to be the legatee of his father after the latter's death caused major friction in the Shi'i community between his followers and the followers of his brother, Hasan b. 'Ali (d. 873). The latter group eventually succeeded in suppressing Ja'far's claim, referring to him as the Liar in their sources and paving the way for what later came to be known as the Twelver lineage of imams to be established.

33. See Hasani Razi, *Tabsirat al-'Avam*, 122–133
34. Muhammad b. Makki b. Ahmad 'Amili (d. 1384), otherwise known as the First Martyr, was a prominent Shi'i jurist who was tried and executed by the authorities in Damascus, ostensibly for being a Shi'a.
35. A prominent early Sufi saint of Balkh (d. 782).
36. Sana'i Ghaznavi, the Persian poet most famous for his authorship of *Hadiqat al-Haqiqah* (d. 1131).
37. The famous Sufi poet of Nishabur (d. 1220).
38. *Tafzili* is a term used for a group of Muslims who, unlike Twelver-Shi'ites, do not completely reject the three first caliphs and yet, unlike orthodox Sunnis, believe that 'Ali was the most virtuous of the four caliphs.
39. A Mawlawi House (*Mawlawi-khanah*) is a Sufi lodge associated with the Mawlawi Sufi Order said to have been established by Rumi.
40. Ibn 'Arabi of Spain (d. 1240) is considered by many to be one of the most accomplished Sufi saints of all time. He was a prolific author, and his legacy continues to shape Muslim intellectual and spiritual traditions to the present day. He was nonetheless a controversial figure due to the many provocative and paradoxical statements in his books, especially *Fusus al-Hikam* and *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah*. His books were banned and sometimes burned, with the most recent example being the banning of *al-Futuhat* in 1979 in Egypt.
41. Maybudi, *Favatih*, 65. This book, otherwise known as *Sharh-i Divan-i Imam 'Ali*, is a commentary written by Mir Husayn Maybudi (d. 1505), a Sufi and a judge, on the divan attributed to Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib.
42. *Rajab* is the name of one of the sacred months in the Islamic calendar. In Ibn 'Arabi's elaborate typology of the saints, *rajabiyyun* refers to a type of saint whose mystical revelations had a close association to the month of Rajab.
43. The word used in this anecdote for "Shi'ite" is *rafizi*, a term often used by sources hostile to Shi'ism. It literally means "rejecter," a reference to the rejection of the three first caliphs by the Shi'a.
44. Maybudi, *Favatih*, 207.
45. Maybudi, 142.
46. This is a reference to a widely circulated report from the Prophet in different versions. "My community will divide into seventy-two sects; all but one will enter the Fire," said the Prophet, according to . . .
47. Shams al-Din Khafri (d. 1550) was a prominent polymath scholar of the early Safavid period.
48. Otherwise known as Mulla Sadra (d. 1640), he was a prominent philosopher of the Safavid period known for his grand synthesis of philosophy, mysticism, and Shi'i theology.
49. Two well-known hadith.
50. Mu'ayyid al-Din Jandi (d. after 1291), was a prominent commentator on Ibn 'Arabi.
51. Sadr al-Din Qunavi (d. 1274), was Ibn 'Arabi's stepson and one of the most prominent systematizers of Ibn 'Arabi's thought.

52. *Barzakh* is a term used in the Islamic literature to refer to an in-between world where people are held waiting after their death until the Day of Judgment.
53. Or perhaps, “descendants.”
54. See Maybudi, *Favatih*, 143.
55. See Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 2: 340.
56. Qur’an 72:26.
57. Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221), was a prominent Sufi who was later recognized as the “founder” of the Kubravi order.
58. Abu Muhammad Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209) was a Sufi shaykh and poet from Fars.
59. See Muhammad b. Hasan Tusi, *Tahzib al-Ahkam*. Ed. Hasan al-Kharsan (Beirut: Dar al-azva’, 1985), 1:92 and 3:6.

FURTHER READING

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II. The Worldview of a Sufi in the Ottoman Realm

HAKIKI AND HIS *BOOK OF GUIDANCE*

F. BETUL YAVUZ

It has been attested in the scholarship that the era after the Mongol invasion and before the rise of the early-modern Muslim empires (roughly between the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries) was a religiously chaotic and pluralistic time. In part due to the lack of political authorities proclaiming the rightful way of being a Muslim, significant adjustments were made at all levels of society to more syncretistic views of the universe and the human being, more inclusive perceptions of time and history, and diverse applications of social identities and rituals.¹

In particular with regard to Sufism, this era saw the rise of brotherhoods as encompassing networks of spiritual and social authority over the lands of Islam. Sufi shaykhs came to be understood as community leaders, asserting authority in the worldly affairs of their followers as much as in the spiritual realm. There was also an infiltration of Shi'ite ideals and concepts, including those that had been deemed excessive and marginal (ghulat) in heresiographical books of the past. Among those ideas, we find the teaching of the unity-of-being (wahdat al-wujud) understood in quite materialistic terms, the cyclical view of the time and existence, the heightened love and dedication for 'Ali (Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and the first of the Shi'i imams) as the head of the saints, and an aura of social protest against the privileged classes.

All three Muslim empires of the early modern era seemed to have had to deal with manifestations of such divergent forms of Sufism to claim and protect their sovereignty. For the Ottoman Empire, noteworthy research has been done regarding the transformation of various Sufi orders in an attempt to understand

how they adjusted to the new conditions of state-enforced religious doctrines and practices.²

The Bayrami Sufi Order, which was founded in the mid-fifteenth century by a beloved Turkish Sufi shaykh, Hacı Bayram Veli (d. 1430) was split into two when the older, illiterate, and unassuming devotee (Emir Dede, d. 1476) disagreed with the younger and madrasa-educated successor (Akshemseddin, d. 1459). Emir Dede's followers differentiated themselves from the main body of the Bayramiyye by refusing to wear specific Sufi garments and practice common Sufi rituals that were established in the lodges. During the sixteenth century, their messianic proclivities peaked, and their opposition with the state took a particularly intense form. Several pirs (spiritual leaders) of the order were executed for holding heretical beliefs and engaging in active propaganda to disseminate them.

By the seventeenth century, however, the order shifted its main locality from small Anatolian and Balkanic cities to Istanbul, the capital of the empire, and tried to fit into the world of intellectual and administrative elite in this city. The effort was remarkably successful, and by the late seventeenth century, the order had formed a network among the intellectuals, bureaucrats, court officials, and military administrators. It is during this time in Istanbul that we come across various manuscripts produced by authors who belonged to this branch of the Bayramis and tried to explain the worldview of the order to the literati in Istanbul. The excerpt from the treatise that is translated below, *Irshadname*, was written in the year 1601 by an author known as al-Hakiki (the Truthful). Hakiki wrote in simple and clear Turkish, although he seems to have been fairly educated and capable of understanding classical sources in Arabic and Persian. His poetic quotations in these languages do not appear in this translation in an effort to keep the text simple.

In the *Irshadname*, Hakiki first explains the formation of the universe through emanation from the divine origin thanks to the creative force of the eternal and limitless love (*'ishk*). The first essence that appears is the prophetic essence (*hakikat-i Muhammadiyya*), which continually manifests itself through the prophets and holy saints (*evliya*) on this earth. Hakiki also explains that the cosmos is comprised of a constant circulation of the four elements (air, earth, water, fire), which continually construct new beings (minerals, plants, animals, and humans) as they move in a yearning to find their way back to the original abode of oneness. This can be achieved by reaching (i.e. taking part in the formation of) the human being who attains the gnosis, accomplishes perfection, and becomes absolved from this eternal cycle of life. Hakiki explains that one cannot become aware of this knowledge and tread on this path without a proper master (*shaykh*) who possesses certain qualities. The sign of a real master is that he should be able to lead and manage his disciples' through real spiritual experience and ecstasy. One cannot become a shaykh by just putting on a Sufi garment and playing the role, and many of those who do that are simply liars and deceivers. Finally, Hakiki endeavors to clear the order from accusations of heresy and unruly behavior. He explains that when such problematic belief and behavior are detected, the offenders are admonished and punished through the internal dynamics of the order.

Overall, the treatise offers a fascinating window into various spiritual claims and ideas at a crucial period in Ottoman history, and showcases how they were communicated in its intellectual and social scene.

TRANSLATION

The Book of Guidance (Irshadname)

Boundless precious words of gratitude and immeasurable adornments of thanks to God, the conqueror of hearts, the forgiver of sins, the necessary being, the possessor of generosity and munificence, the never-perishing creator and maker without beginning and end. He is the living, the self-subsisting and the loving One. Be aware of greatness of his court and magnificence of his threshold that in accordance with [the hadith] “there was God and there was nothing with him,” when nothing from the earths and heavens, the Throne (*‘arsh*) and the Footstool (*kursi*), the Tablet (*levh*) and the Pen (*kalem*), none of the other things and created bodies, were existent, He was existent. In this oneness of dominion, through a ray of light stemming from his beauty, he caused a manifestation to appear and brought the whole universe into existence (*vucud*). He also afflicted the world and the human being with the fire of love (*‘ishk*). Boundless praises to the cleansed and enlightened one, the untainted existence, regarding whom God the Exalted said: “if it was not for you, I would not have created the spheres.” Master and leader of the Prophethood, the sun and the moon of he-ness (*huviyet*), the object of light of oneness (*ahadiyet*), I mean, his highness Muhammad, the abode of prophetic message. Be aware that the meaning of “I created things for you and created you for myself”³ was revealed for his dignity and nobility.

O seeker of mysteries of prophetic guidance, and desirous of the level of conduct of saints, know and be aware that the essence of God, the exalted, in the light of origin and in the world of unity, was a hidden treasure without an abode, “I was a hidden treasure. I loved to be known and created the universe to be known.”⁴

When He was absolutely free of any need, was the transcendent and Holy King, “God is free of all needs from creation,” [Q 3:97; 29:6], the necessity of eternal love and anxious yearning appeared. In accordance with the saying “he manifested himself to himself,” he manifested himself to himself and he fell in love with his own beauty and perfection.

Since the ever-bountiful, generous, and merciful King fell in love with himself, He wished to hold a mirror to his own beauty and to the mystery of his own perfect essence so that He can always observe his own beauty in this mirror. He also wished to manifest the perfection of his power, his greatness and his endless treasure, and to create the world and the human being from the light of reflection of this mirror. . . . At first, He created the mystery of Muhammad (*sırr-ı Muhammadi*) and the light of Ahmad from His own pure essence of eternal-besoughtness (*samediyet*)

and his pure light of oneness. Thus the graceful messenger unveiled the mystery and informed us about his being the eternal reality. The prophet said: “The first thing God created was my light,” “The first thing God created was my spirit,” “The first thing God created was my intellect,” and “The first thing God created was the Pen.” The essence of these four designations is one and that is the Reality of Muhammad. Nonetheless it becomes four in accordance with different levels (of meaning), and all four of them point out that the Reality of Muhammad is the most ancient one. To this, great masters gave the name the most-high mirror (*mir’at-i hazret*), and from the day of the origin to the day of the resurrection, all seekers of God and all lovers of beauty of His greatness, in accordance with the hadith “whoever saw me, has also seen the Lord,” observe the beauty of God through the Reality of Muhammad. This is why it is called the most-high mirror and it is also called the greatest spirit (*ruh-u ‘azam*) as all spirits and shades have emerged from it. He, whose beautiful qualities and high morals are beyond description, is the source of the universe and the human being, and he is the greatest Spirit and the mirror of the light of the most Honorable because God the most-high made him a mirror to his pure essence and to the light of his beauty.

God manifested himself by looking into this mirror, and presented his own beauty to himself. At first, the divine love prevailed from God’s never-perishing beauty, then the ocean of oneness started boiling and roaring, and the primordial treasure (*genc-i ezeli*) and the never-perishing pearl (*lu’lu’*) began to spread. . . . All meanings of the unseen realized into figures and determinations through the necessity of the primordial wisdom, as God the exalted stroke the foundation of this world with his love. In accordance with (the verse) “verily, when He intends a thing, his command is ‘be’ and it is,” [Q. 36:82], when his essential speech through the tongue of power talked and said “be,” it was manifested in the most-high mirror, the Muhammadan Reality. In this manifestation, all particles of the world were reflected and they came into manifestation (*zuhur*) by emanating and flashing (*feyzan ve lem’an*). When earths and heavens, the Throne and the Footstool, the Tablet and the Pen, high and low spirits, bodies (*ecsam*), shades of elements (*eshbah-ı unsuriyat*), abstracts (*muceredat*), substances (*cevahir*), accidents (*a’raz*), plants (*nebatat*), minerals (*ma’deniyat*), and animals (*hayvaniyat*), and all of their various kinds, classes and singulars, all the marvelous engravings, all created things were nonexistent in the well of nothingness (*ketm-i ‘adem*), due to the manifestation of the primordial love they came into existence through the command “be.”

There is also this report (*rivayet*): “God created a substance (*cevher*) and looked at it with his gaze of grandeur. The substance melted and from its gist the earth came into being, and from its smoke the heavens appeared.” Meaning, in the beginning God the exalted created a substance and looked at it with the look of grandeur. The substance melted and became water. He created earths from its foam and heavens from its smoke. Knowledge of interpretation and truth (*‘ilm-i te’vil ve hakikat*) requires that intention from this substance is also the Reality of Muhammad. Likewise when God the exalted says in His great Qur’an and the ancient

word, "He created you from one soul (*nefs*)," [Q. 7:189]⁵ 'one soul' here is also the Reality of Muhammad. In that sense, the beginning and gist of everything is the Reality of Muhammad and it was essentially created from the light of God's own eternal besoughtness.

All other spirits (*arvah*) were created from the reflection of the ray of the Reality of Muhammad. Since the Reality of Muhammad was created from God's own light and all other spirits were created from the reflection of the light of the Reality of Muhammad, it necessarily follows that the origin of all things is the Reality of Muhammad. Likewise, the origin of the Reality of Muhammad is God the most-high. According to this meaning, on the day of origin all spirits were not separate from the Reality of Muhammad, and it was not separate from God the most-high; rather all of them were -nonexistent (*ma'dum*) in the essence of God. The ancient, singular, living, self-subsisting and eternally besought One was just Himself. Duality and separation (*ikilik ve ayrılık*) occurred after coming into this world of multiplicity (*kesret*) and everybody forgot about their origin (*asl*).

. . . It follows, then, that all spirits in accordance with (the verse) "I breathed into him of my spirit" [Q. 15:29] emerged from one origin, descended from that world of oneness to this world of multiplicity, wore the flesh of creation through oppositions of four elements and joined the cycle (*devr*) of the universe. The sun, the moon, and all the other stars in the sky, and everything on the earth act and move in accordance with the cycle from day to day. The spirit, which according to the verse "Say: the spirit (comes) by command of my Lord" [Q. 17:85] belongs to the command of the Lord, circulates into the world of the human being after so many levels (of existence).

The goal in appearing on the level of human being is learning the gnosis of God (*marifet-i Hak*), returning to the origin, consequently arriving at and connecting with the circle of reaching God (*yusul ila'l-Allah dairesi*). It has been related in the tradition that these spirits upon falling apart from the threshold of God (*dergah-i Hak*) and the absolute King (*padishah-i mutlak*), wailed and moaned. In accordance with the purport of "guide us to the straight way," [Q. 1:6], they wanted to be shown a way to return to the glorious court of God. To all of them, the highest calling and pleasant addressing of the Creator told them to go to Adam, so that through his heart they can find a way back to him (God) and obtain the capability to attain his glorious threshold. In this manner, God commanded and destined. In accordance with this destination, all created things, trying to find a way to the human being, restlessly fell into the cycle.

. . . O seeker of the Truth (*talib-i Hak*), know and be aware that the sun, the moon, and all stars in the sky, and all minerals, plants, and animals on the earth revolve, revel, and move with the intention of appearing as a human. Only through this form, they can obtain the aptitude to know the essence (of God) and His making, and acquire perfections of the creator. As a result, they can break away from the cycle of this elaborate world and find deliverance from the abyss of coming and going. They return to the primordial origin, which is the closeness to the

threshold of the Truth, the most-high. They remain in this position for eternity obtaining governance (*devlet*) and greatness (*'uzmet*) of the Lord, his felicity, and his highness of eternal besoughtedness. According to this meaning, once again, the gist, the most superior, and the most honorable of all things is the form of the human being (*suret-i insan*). The verse, "we have indeed created the human being in the best of molds" [Q. 95:4] is a witness to this meaning. If there was another object (*nesne*) that is better and superior to this form, perfections of God would be manifested through it and it would be worthy of being the location for the manifestation of God.

If the human being cannot obtain divine perfections, break away from the cycle, attain God, and find salvation while in this image, his way to the heavenly world will be tied up after leaving this world behind. His destination will be far away and his station will remain in the cycle. The *pir* (the master of the order) has said with his own holy tongue that in the books and pamphlets of some prophets and in the honorable Torah of Moses, the decree is that such a person's punishment and torment will continue for seventy thousand years. In the honorable Bible that was revealed to Jesus, however, the decree is that such a person will eternally remain in the lowest degree enduring punishment and torment. The great messenger (Muhammad), on the other hand, indicated it will last for seven thousand years. There is also a word and a decree in the Qur'an that many people, in accordance with the purport of "in the fire of hell they stay for eternity," [Q. 98:6], will remain in the grief of darkness and in the fire forever. There is never salvation and safety for them. These prophetic decrees are all true and their statements explain various lowly stages of different creatures. Creatures differ in their stations, otherwise there could never be an opposition between the words of prophets. The final statement is that after someone leaves the form (of the human being), he arrives at extremely dangerous places and may God protect all believers from those aforementioned places.

Now it is necessary to recognize this form (*suret*) as an opportunity and to gain divine perfections through hard work and unsparing endeavor without falling into negligence. In accordance with "man can have nothing but what he strives for," [Q. 53:39] an individual's position is determined by the amount of his work. Certainly, the one who loses this chance will waste this delicate life being deceived by ornaments and shadows of this world. This (chance) won't be given again, and its end is remorse and depravity. The smart person is the one who does not waste this chance and spend his life in heedlessness; he understands the meaning of "this world is the sowing ground for the next,"⁶ maintains obedience and worship (*ibadet ve ta'at*) day and night, and is occupied towards the direction of God.

Now, O wayfarer of the path and seeker of the truth, do not give your heart to this temporary world or bind your heart to it. Do not be deceived by its ornaments and decorations, because there is no permanence to it. Drink the wine (*bade*) of divine love from the cupbearer of oneness (*saki-i vahdet*), because the time passes and the days of the world do not persist. If you find peace of heart and purity of mind with the divine love, do not waste it; because the heart can not always find the time of

purity or the place of comfort. In every instant and in every breath, make effort, endeavor, and work for your feet to remain firm on the straight path. In accordance with the purport of “make your morals the same with that of God and make your attributes the same with that of God,”⁷ transform your reproached morals into praised ones and endow yourself with attributes of God. It is incumbent and an important command on every Muslim that in accordance with the purport of “the one whose bosom Allah expanded for Islam, he is upon a light from his Lord,” [Q. 39:22], he should expand his bosom, purify his soul and his heart from dark attributes and carnal filths, and become a place of luminous and spiritual faith (*iman-i nurani ve ruhani*). Through this luminosity and spirituality, one can be endowed with the attributes of God and return to the original homeland (*vatan-i asli*).

This meaning we explained can only occur by reaching the perfect human being (*insan-i kamil*) and the perfect guide (*murshid-i mukemmel*), and completely submitting to him. The guide is not a person who embellishes his words with the outward and acquired knowledge (*ilm-i zahir, ilm-i kesebi*) and decorates his appearance with a headdress (*tac*) and an outer garment (*hırka*).⁸ These people did not step a foot into the station of guidance (*makam-i irshad*), but are rather outside of it. Because this is the case, it is forbidden for them to guide other people. They are imitators and adorers of appearances and are unaware of the mystery of the people of the verification and meaning (*ehl-i mana ve ehl-i tahkik*). Those who are adorned with the rightful appearance on the outside, but are tainted with hidden polytheism in the inside in the manner explained, are in accordance with the purport of “in their hearts is a disease” [Q. 5:52] are ill and lifeless (*dem-beste*). They change their appearances for the sake of making a living. . . . Now, do not be deceived by these shaykhs who are equipped with the outward knowledge and adorned with the headdress and the outer garment, and are the shaykhs of the people of the apparel (*ehl-i kisvet*). To obtain the love of God, go to the perfect guide who encloses the inward and the outward knowledge as well as the divine mysteries (*esrar-i ilahiyye*). He should be able to cast divine blessing into the hearts of his disciples and provide them with states of love, anxious yearning, inclination, ecstasy (*vecd*), and mystical taste (*zevk*) through spiritual rapture (*cezbe-i ruhani*). These are the indications and signs of a perfect guide. Without these indications and signs, those who claim to be perfect guides are not guides, but liars.

When it comes to those who do not follow the divine commands, and abide by the conduct of the path and the shari‘a, they become tainted with malevolent and repugnant acts. They receive reproach (*melamet*) from commoners, and because of them, the perfect guide and his path, as well as all followers of the Sufi orders receive reproach and rebuke. Such people did wrong to themselves, to their pir, to the path, and also to all people of the path. May God protect us from evil of this kind!

Honorable saints—may God sanctify their secrets—in many sources and their stories (*menakib*), have related various admonitions to the people of the wayfaring (*ehl-i suluk*) and indicated that those who circulate, utter, or cause someone to utter

slander against the people of the truth are the same. In this sense, they are the enemies of the true religion and the true path. May God protect us, but there is the fear that they might go from this world to the hereafter without faith. It is necessary that in accordance with the purport of the verse “incline not to those who do wrong,” [Q. 11:113], the people of the truth and the path, should not show favor to them and avoid them in a unified manner. It is necessary and is a command for the people of the path that when they see someone from the path in a situation or in an act that is contrary to the noble law and to the eminent path, they should reject this person and refuse his act. If this person admits his wrongdoing and fault, repents for his sin, vows not to do it again, and asks to turn back to his prior state in the path, then, it is necessary for the people of the truth that elders of the path show him the way back in. If this person obeys whatever the elders of the path command and accept it, the word of God, the tradition of the prophet, and the path of the saints, are known to the people of the truth. They should carry out his punishment accordingly. Then, they can accept him (back into the path) and show him friendliness as before. If the person acts rebellious and does not accept the right (*hak*) that the path has on him, they should reject him. If the person, God forbid, falls into error and continues his false acts thinking they are right and refuses any punishment, and comes to the assembly of the people of truth in this condition; elders of the assembly, after they become cognizant of his behaviors, should talk to him in a good manner and a kind tone. They should tell him of his sin and wrongdoing, his fall into error (*ilhad*), his deviation from the true path, and inform him of his descent into corruption and false beliefs. They should say to him: “because you are in this situation and are acting like that, you are no longer one of us and do not fit into our (group).” They should mention the verse, “say: my work to me, and yours to you; you are free from responsibility for what I do, and I for what you do,” [Q. 10: 41], and banish him from the path. They should also expel him from their hearts and do not show love and inclination toward him. They should not let him get into their assembly until this person repents, relents deeply, and complies to go through the punishment (*had*) for his sin and-wrongdoing in accordance with the noble law and the illuminated path. He should return from his fallacious beliefs and follow the commandments of God, sayings of the prophet, and the decree, knowledge, and action of the perfect guide. If he wants to be accepted by people of the path and demands his affiliation back, then the rule of people of the path is that they should let him know about the necessary punishment and show him the rightful way. If he is obedient to whatever the commandment is and is pleased with it, they should perform the decree of “if you did good, you did good for yourselves; if you did evil, you did it against yourselves,” [Q. 17:7], and do the right thing. Meaning, if it is necessary to hit him (*had urmak*), they should hit him. If it is to put him to the service or put him in the prison (*karakolluga komak*), they should do that. If it is to rebel (*kazgan kaynatmak*) and take money from him, they should do that. To summarize, whatever punishment is necessary for the kind of wrongdoing a person commits is known to the perfect guide and to people of the path. They should carry it out in accordance with

the command and agreement of the perfect guide. Only then, they can accept this person and open their hearts to him as before. They should eliminate animosity, vanity, and grudge, and be on good terms with him in the spirit of unity like before. After this stage, they should not refrain from this person anymore.

The summary of my words is that all great prophets, beginning from Adam and ending with the seal of prophets, Muhammad, were locations of manifestation for the Muhammadan reality and the Ahmadian light. They invited all creatures to the religion of Islam. Those who believed in prophets and followed them, in accordance with the meaning of “(God) leads them out of darkness to the light,” [Q. 2:257; 5:16], arrived at the light of oneness and guidance, leaving behind the darkness of denial, error, and multiplicity. After the seal of the prophets, beginning from the head of the *evliya*, meaning, imam “Ali (son-in-law of Muhammad)—may God dignify his face-, —until this time, and from this time until the end of the world, honorable *evliya* are endowed with the mystery of the verse “we make them leaders and we make them heirs.” [Q. 28:5]. They are the possessors of leadership (*imama*) in the niche of the truth; they are the heirs to the prophets and the objects of the light of the manifestation. In this sense, they were sent to save everybody from the darkness of mortal humanity, purify them from denial and polytheism, and lead them toward divine guidance and light of faith.

Those, who accepted their calling, professed faith, inclined toward their guidance, and carried out right deeds, became receivers of divine blessing and attain-ers of this light. Thanks to this divine light, they obtained proximity to God the most-high and returned to their original homeland. They are believers and confirmers of the oneness of being and are saved from the darkness of denial. They are included within the circle of the paradise and can see the face of the Beloved. Those, who do not accept the calling of the prophets and the saints, profess faith, and incline toward their guidance, cannot become receivers of the divine blessing. They remain in denial and blasphemy and join the flock of Satan. They stay in the eternal cycle that we described above and become the people of fire (hell).

NOTES

1. For more information on this period, see Michel Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids* (Wiesbaden, Germany: F. Steiner, 1972); Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 493–500; Annemarie Schimmel, “The Ornament of the Saints: The Religious Situation in Iran in Pre-Safavid Times,” *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974): 88–111; B. S. Amoretti, “Religion Under the Timurids and the Safavids,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 610–23; Kathryn Babayan, *Mytics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscape of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

2. Among others, see Ahmet Karamustafa, "Origins of Anatolian Sufism," in *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society: Sources, Doctrine, Rituals, Turuq, Architecture, Literature and Fine Arts, Modernism*, ed. Ahmet Yasar Ocak (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2005), 67–95; Dina LeGall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World (1450–1700)* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005); John J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350–1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Derin Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012), 86–99; Hasan Karatas, "The Ottomanization of the Halveti Sufi Order: A Political Story Revisited," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 1, nos. 1–2 (2014): 71–89.
3. "Khalaqtu'l-ashya li ajlik ve khalaqtuk li ajli." The text includes a lot of sacrosanct hadith (sayings that were believed to have been uttered by God through the mouth of the Prophet) that cannot necessarily be traced in this translation. Please refer to Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 477–78) for an index of prophetic sayings commonly used by Sufis.
4. "Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan fa-ahbibtu an-'urifa fakhalaqtu al-khalqa li an 'urifa."
5. "Man raani fa-qad raa'l-Haq" (prophetic saying).
6. "Al-dunya merzi'atu'l-akhira" (prophetic saying).
7. "Takhallaqu bi akhlaq-Allah va ittasafu bi sifat-Allah" (prophetic saying).
8. Also mentioned are *misvak* (a stick of wood used as a toothbrush, believed to have been a tradition of the Prophet), *talesyan* (one end-piece of the cloth turban [*sarik*] put on one shoulder), *cubbe* (long and wide outer garment worn by men as a tradition of the prophet).

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III. Sufism and the Divine Law

AHMAD SIRHINDI'S RUMINATIONS

ARTHUR F. BUEHLER

Of all Sufis of the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624) is the most well-known in the Islamic world due to his *Collected Letters*, 536 letters intricately detailing Sufi practice and its relationship to *shari'at* (divine law).¹ Through these letters Sirhindi redefined and expanded Sufi practice and notions of *shari'at* to such an extent that he was called the “renewer of the second millennium.”

Under the tutelage of Baqibillah (d. 1603 in Delhi), Sirhindi finally had his own breakthroughs in contemplative experience that changed his life. He experienced the (apparent) ontological unity of being that his father 'Abdulahad had taught him from books. Baqibillah made sure that Sirhindi went beyond this stage as soon as possible.² From there, Sirhindi was able to experience both multiplicity and unity and could discern between them. What had changed in the interim between these experiences was that he had become an incredibly transformed human being. With this realization, Sirhindi noted that large numbers of Sufis were interpreting their unity-of-being experience as an experience of God. Sirhindi had conclusively confirmed through experience what his mentor had told him, namely, that they were merely experiencing the shadows of the attributes of God. Even more distressing was their increasing disregard for the injunctions of the divine law. Sirhindi went from being a bright, freshly certified Sufi teacher to a man with a mission.

More than any other Naqshbandi Sufi after Baha'uddin, Sirhindi was the pivotal figure who redefined Sufism's role in society and who elaborated Mujaddidi mystical exercises. His title, “the renewer of the second millennium” (*mujaddid-i alf-i thani*), makes him a cofounder figure for the later Naqshbandiyya and reflects

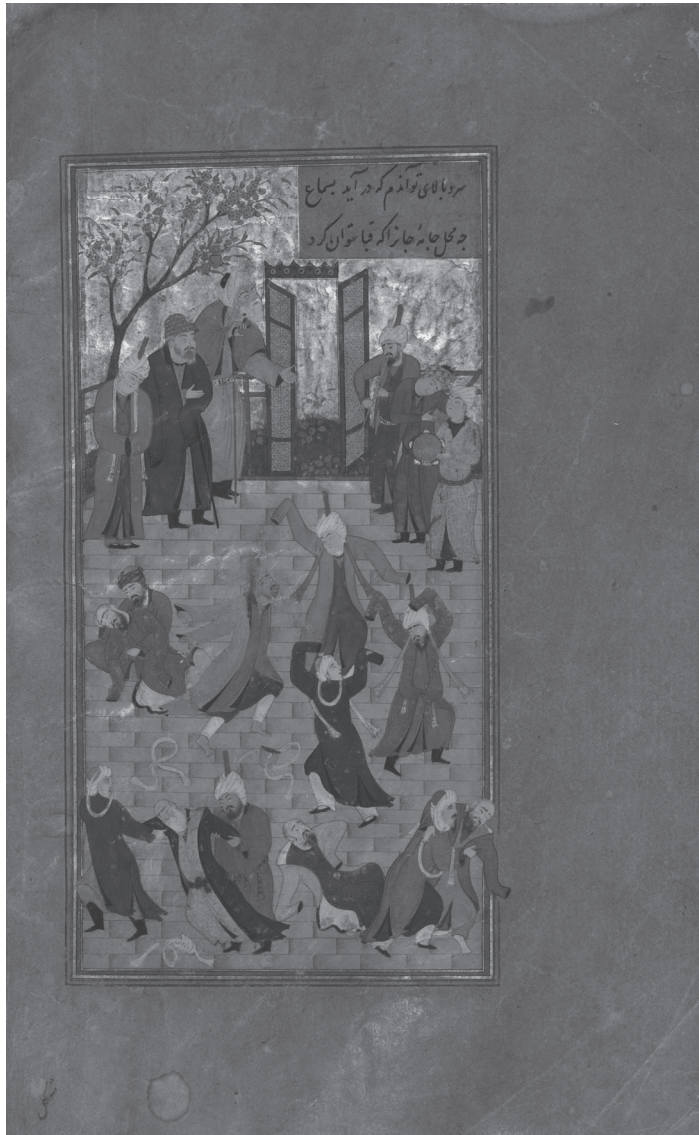


FIGURE 3.2 Sufis in devotional ceremonial dance known as *sama'*

This illustration from a copy of Hafiz's *Divan* depicts Sufis engrossed in *sama'* that some religious scholars found controversial. It was scribed by the famed calligrapher Zayn al-'Abidin 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jami in 1512 in Safavid Iran.

Source: "Divan-i Hafiz," collection of poems (divan). Walters Ms. W.628, fol. 49B

Author: Hafiz (1315–1390); Zayn al-'Abidin 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jami (scribe)

Date: 1512

Place of origin: Iran

Credit: Walters Art Museum

the significance of his influence. He was so convincing in his stress on following the prophetic example and on shari'at as the basis for prostrational experience that almost all Naqshbandi Sufis worldwide became Mujaddidis by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Of all the Indo-Muslim leaders of the seventeenth century, Sirhindi was one of the most prolific. Much material in his seven epistles and collection of 536 letters expresses a deliberate scheme to define the spiritual boundaries of the Indian Muslim community. Unlike other Sufi practices, which were culture-specific or geographically rooted in the subcontinent, Sirhindi's letters could be disseminated in their original Persian or translated and transmitted throughout the non-Persianate Islamic world. Such a "book" made Mujaddidi practices and teachings both persuasive and accessible to educated Muslims anywhere. Some consider the separate nation-state of Pakistan as the twentieth-century manifestation of a conception of an Islamic orthodoxy and community significantly influenced by Sirhindi's teachings.³

THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF AHMAD SIRHINDI: AN OVERVIEW

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi began writing letters to his spiritual guide Baqibillah in 1599. In 1616, Muhammad Jadid Badakhshi Talaqani, one of Sirhindi's disciples, compiled the first volume of these letters. There are 313 letters in the first volume with the chronogram title, *The Pearl of Inner Knowledge* (*Durr al-ma'rifat*). Sirhindi's son, Muhammad Ma'sum, directed 'Abdulhayy b. Khwaja Chakar Hisari to compile a second volume of 99 letters, corresponding to the number of the most beautiful names of God with the chronogram title, *The Light of Creation* (*Nur al-khala'iq*). This was published in 1619. The third volume of 114 letters was compiled by Muhammad Hashim Kishmi Burhanpuri in 1622, with the chronogram title, *The Inner Knowledge of the Realities* (*Ma'rifat al-haqaiq*). Ahmad Sirhindi passed away before there were enough letters for a fourth volume, so the printed versions include another eight or ten letters.

The first complete lithographed edition of *Collected Letters* (*Maktubat*) was printed in Delhi in 1871, followed by seven, almost exact, reprints. Then Nur Ahmad (d. 1930) began to edit what has become the critical edition of *Collected Letters*. Born in the Sialkot district of what is now Pakistan, Nur Ahmad left for Mecca in 1881, becoming initiated by the famous Chishti-Sabiri master Shah Imdadullah (d. 1899). Returning to India in 1890, he was initiated by the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi shaykh, Shah Abu'l-Khayr (d. 1924 in Delhi), and began to work on the critical edition of *Collected Letters*. Using teams of able students, he gathered all available manuscripts and over a period of three years, and these manuscripts were compared with the lithographed edition. Nur Ahmad went to Sirhind Sharif after all discrepancies were noted, and Ahmad Sirhindi's family allowed

him to compare his corrected copy with the manuscripts there. Then he began a massive editing project, isolating and identifying Qur'an passages and hadith, translating and defining difficult Arabic and Persian words and phrases, supplying biographical and bibliographical information on well-known Sufis, jurists, and their writing, defending Sirhindi occasionally against his detractors, and adding a subject index for each letter at the beginning of each of the nine fascicles that were published between 1909 and 1916. This publication was printed on four different paper qualities, ranging in price from one rupee, four annas to two rupees, eight annas. Until a 2004 Iranian edition, just about all *Collected Letters* published in Persian after 1916 were facsimile versions of the original lithographed Nur Ahmad edition.

No other published Sufi treatise goes into such detailed explanations of Sufi practice and how to facilitate postrational experience and ego transformation. Nor has any other Sufi treatise been translated into so many other languages. Along with the *Mathnawi* of Jalaluddin Rumi, the *Collected Letters* has probably been the most widely disseminated Islamic text (but not the most read because of its extreme difficulty) after the Qur'an.

LETTER 1.11: ONE OF SIRHINDI'S EARLY CONTEMPLATIVE EXPERIENCES

Letter 1.11 begins with Ahmad Sirhindi writing to his shaykh, Baqibillah (d. 1603),⁴ concerning his second experience of a station.⁵ Here we learn that passing through a station is not the same as being stabilized in a station. Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis ascending in their contemplative exercises (*muraqabat*) pass through the *reflections* of the stations of the prophets, but this is not the same as resting in those actual prophetic stations. Nor is passing through the stations of one's spiritual superiors the same as resting there. This point is important, for some have accused Sirhindi of implying his superiority to the revered Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, the first successor to Muhammad.⁶ Indeed, it is this letter that ostensibly caused alarm with Jahangir, who accused Sirhindi of having "also written a number of idle tales to his disciples and believers and made them into a book which he called *Collected Letters*, (*Mak-tubat*), [which] drag (people) into infidelity and impurity."⁷

In this letter, he described his experience of the station of annihilation of the ego-self in God with its respective attraction to God (*jadhba*), known as "wayfaring in God." Trying to make sense out of what happened, Sirhindi decided that his experience was probably what Khwaja 'Ubaydullah Ahrar (d. 1490 in Samarqand) had experienced. It is this experience that moved him from the path of intentional, willful action to that of being in intimate spiritual companionship with Baqibillah. Throughout the *Collected Letters* Sirhindi discusses a station and the center of a station, where the movement is from the periphery of the station to the center. From the center, one typically moves to the periphery of the next station.

When going inside, Sirhindi described an abyss, the experiences of which resonate very much with what Christian contemplatives have called “the dark night.”⁸ This is a poignant reminder that inner wayfaring is not always a joyride. One of the experiences of the station of servanthood (*maqam-i ‘abdiyyat*), the highest station of the stations of being near to God (*maqamat-i walayat*), is being yanked out of one’s separateness. This happens in such a way that one is confronted with one’s corporeal darkness and denseness as the subtle centers of the created world suddenly zoom very distant from the world of command.⁹ This is the place from which Sirhindi said that he was worse than a foreign infidel or an apostate heretic, someone who has denied God and who will not have the benefit of God’s mercy in the Hereafter.

Differentiating different levels of reality was a common theme for Sirhindi. One should not confuse the entity (*‘ayn*) and the traces of the entity (the attributes). Because Sirhindi is of the Muhammadi disposition (*mashrab*), he and Shaykh Abu Sa’id Abu’l Khayr (d. 1049 in Nishapur) have passed beyond contemplative witnessing (*shuhud*) of the attributes to contemplatively witness the qualities (*shuyunat*) of God.¹⁰ Sirhindi was able to verify his experience of the Essence by “comparing notes” with his predecessor, ‘Ubaydullah Ahrar, and confirmed that experiencing an absolute annihilation in God depends on experiencing the disclosure of the Essence (*tajalli-yi dhati*) first.¹¹ It was from this station that Sirhindi proceeded to further higher stations and was able to stabilize himself in the station of the disclosure of the Essence and experience “presence with God” (*hudur ma’ Allah*). One outcome of this experience was his losing interest in reading about others’ inner experiences and descriptions of the maps that guided such experiences. He was still very much in transition. Even with his inclination toward the ideas of Shaykh ‘Ala’uddawla Simnani (d. 1336), Sirhindi wisely realized that he did not have enough experience to jump to conclusions about experiences of the unity-of-being.

Toward the end of the letter Sirhindi chose not to engage with Ibn al-‘Arabi concerning their different perspectives. Instead he gave us a glimpse of a shaykh’s life and activities beyond spiritual guidance, for example, assisting disembodied spirits on their way and being spiritually and physically attacked.

The next section concerned the age-old difficulties shaykhs have with their disciples: laziness, self-sabotage, and other ego strategies to prevent them from progressing. Given the experiences he described in the first part of the letter, it appears that Sirhindi had only received conditional permission to teach. Baqibillah was still formally supervising Sirhindi’s teaching. After discussing his teaching experiences, there is some technical discussion that makes sense only to Mujaddidi specialists. The reader can recognize that seekers “travel” in the various subtle centers and that they are in various stages of ascent to God or descent to the material world.

Sirhindi often mentioned the attributes and Essence because the student often experienced the attributes as different from the Essence. How they experience the attributes/Essence is a litmus test for their progress and difficulties. The guiding

Mujaddidi principle following Sunni-Maturidi creedal injunctions is that the attributes of God are neither the Essence nor other than the Essence.¹² Thus, when students experienced the attributes/Essence in a manner described in this letter, they have made significant progress. Sirhindi ended the letter in the bewilderment of experiencing something beyond oneness, and beyond will and desire. These are annihilated as he engages in spiritual companionship (*suhbat*) with his completed and completion-bestowing shaykh.

Translation

LETTER 1.11

When the lowest of servants, Ahmad (Ahmad Sirhindi), was in a previously experienced station, in accordance with your noble instructions, he caught a glimpse of the first three caliphs. God almighty be pleased with them.¹³ They are [supposed to] appear in that station. I did not see them the first time because I was not stabilized in that station. I could only recognize Hasan, Husayn (the Prophet's grandsons), and Zaynul'abidin (Husayn's son) from the Prophet's family. God almighty be pleased with all of them. However, I did experience the Prophet's family passing through this station. By keen observation one can realize this.

At first I perceived that I did not have an affinity for this station. Lack of affinity or connection (*munasabat*) is of two kinds. [Temporary], that is, when no path appears and they show a path to him. Then there is a connection. [Second], Absolute, where there is no way to move. There are two paths that lead to this station, not three. That is, from the perspective of these two paths, another does not appear. The first path is seeing one's shortcomings and faults. With a strong attraction to God, one focuses all intentions on good works. The second path is spiritual companionship (*suhbat*) with a completed shaykh who is attracted to God and who has finished wayfaring/contemplative practice (*suluk*). God almighty, by means of your (Baqibillah's) favor, has blessed me with the first path to the extent of my ability.¹⁴ Bless God.

No good deeds are happening even though I concern myself with this. But there comes a time that I no longer give any importance [to good deeds] and become agitated. One knows that there are no deeds being performed that are worthy of the angel above the right shoulder to record.¹⁵ It is known that the book on the right has no good deeds written in it. Any writing is futile and useless. How could I be worthy of God almighty? Anything in the world is better than I, even a foreign infidel or apostate heretic. I can be considered worse than all of them.¹⁶

With respect to attraction to God, some requisites and related aspects of [attraction to God] remained although I had completed "wayfaring to God" (*sayr ila Allah*). This happened while experiencing annihilation of self in the center of the station of "wayfaring in God" (*sayr fi'llah*). All of this was complete. The states of annihilation of self occurred as I detailed to you in the last letter. It must be that this

is the annihilation discussed by Khwaja 'Ubaydullah Ahrar when he said, "the end of this work." It must be the same annihilation that is verified after the disclosure of the Essence and ascertaining the realization of "wayfaring in God." The annihilation of intentionality is one aspect of this annihilation. As long as one is not annihilated in God, he will not be able to go to God's Majestic Court.

Those who do not have an affinity for this station are in two groups. One group focuses on the station and searches for a way to arrive. The other group does not even turn toward the station. Turning toward Baqibillah, according to the second path [of having spiritual companionship with a completed shaykh attracted to God], is a more effective way to arrive at this station than other paths. The affinity and connection of this path is evident because it is established with Baqibillah. It is all about obedience to his command. Sometimes there is arrogance and boldness, otherwise, I am this very Ahmad, your ancient servant.

The second time I observed from this station, other stations appeared, one higher than the other. After focusing on begging and grief, I experienced the station above the first station. I realized that this station was that of 'Uthman b. 'Affan (the third caliph, assas. 656),¹⁷ and that the other caliphs also had passed through this station. This station is one of completion (*takmil*) and guidance. There are two stations above this one that I will discuss now. Above [the station of completion and guidance] another station came into view. When I arrived at that station, I became aware that this was the station of 'Umar Faruq (the second caliph, assas. 644) and that the other caliphs had also passed through [this station]. Above this, the station of Abu Bakr (the first caliph, d. 634) appeared. God almighty be pleased with all of them. I also experienced this station.¹⁸ In addition, I was with the shaykhs of Baha'uddin Naqshband in the stations they had experienced.¹⁹ The other caliphs (after Abu Bakr) also passed through this station. There is no superiority except [the difference] between passing through a station and being stabilized in a station. There is no station above that of Abu Bakr's except the station of the Seal of the Messengers (Muhammad). God bless him completely and perfectly.

Another station of light came into view opposite Abu Bakr Siddiq's station. God almighty be pleased with him. It was so exquisitely beautiful that nothing like this had appeared before. It was a bit higher than Abu Bakr's station like the height of a bench above the ground. Abu Bakr's station is the station of belovedness (*mahbubiyat*), variegated and colorful. I experienced the many colors reflected from this station. After this, in the same manner, I experienced a subtlety spread out on the horizon in all four directions like the sky or fragments of clouds. Baha'uddin Naqshband is in the station of Abu Bakr. God almighty be pleased with them both. I found myself in the station opposite to the station of Abu Bakr and experienced it in the same manner [with variegated colors and subtlety].

Another thing that happened was my giving up guiding others on the path because it was not satisfying. It felt like I had become drowned and lost in the abyss of the world. How can a person who finds the inner strength to come forth from this abyss be able to forgive oneself? No matter how many other things a person may

have to do, it is necessary and agreeable to guide others. But guiding others is conditional upon asking forgiveness if troubling, evil doubts occur while guiding others. Then one requests God's satisfaction. Without observing these conditions, satisfaction will not benefit the person, who will then remain at the bottom of the abyss. According to Baha'uddin Naqshband and 'Ala'uddin 'Attar (d. 1400 in Hissar, Tajikistan), without observing these conditions one can guide others and have God's satisfaction. God almighty bless their inner hearts. This lowly one, without observing these conditions, found that sometimes there was God's satisfaction. Other times I was at the bottom of the abyss.

Another experience is in the book *Fragrances of Intimacy* (this is 'Abdurrahman Jami's *Nafahat al-uns*). Quoting Shaykh Abu Sa'id Abu'l Khayr (d. 1049 in Nishapur),²⁰ "When the entity ('*ayn*) does not remain where will the trace (the attribute) remain?"²¹ "It does not leave one alone or spare one"²² [Q. 74:28]. These words at first glance are difficult to understand. According to Shaykh Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240 in Damascus) and his followers, the entity ('*ayn*) is a part of what is known about God almighty and it is impossible to have an extinction of the entity. From ignorance, knowledge changes. When the entity is not extinct, then the trace (associated with an attribute) does not go anywhere either. In this manner, it all makes sense to the mind.

Shaykh Abu Sa'id did not come up with a solution. After utterly concentrating [on this matter], God almighty revealed the secret of these words [to him]. He realized that neither the entity nor the trace remained. He found the meaning in himself, and there was no longer any problem. [For me], the station of this inner knowledge (*ma'rifat*) also came into view. A very high [station] indeed! It was above the station that Ibn 'Arabi and his followers had spoken about. These two experiences (Abu Sa'id's and Ibn 'Arabi's) do not contradict each other. One comes from one place and the other from another place. To explain in detail requires a long discussion.

[Another topic] concerns the lasting nature of this experience [of the flashing disclosure of Essence (*tajalli-yi dhāti-yi barqī*)]. Abu Sa'id said that it also becomes pertinent [to ask] what the meaning of the experience is and what its lasting nature is.²³ I found that this experience was lasting, although it rarely lasts.

Looking at books is another experience that is not at all gratifying except to describe what has happened to notables as they traverse the stations. It is commendable that one can read about this kind of thing. The states of former shaykhs are very interesting. [Theoretical] books about realities and experiential knowledge (*ma'arif*) cannot be comprehended [without actual experience]. This especially [applies to] talk about asserting the unity of being (*tawhīd-i wujūdī*), the ordered emanations (*tanzīlat-i muratib*), and the subtle centers.²⁴ In this regard, I find a great affinity with Shaykh 'Ala'uddawla Simnani, and we are in harmony concerning this matter both in personal inclinations (*dhawq*) and in firsthand experience. However, I am not going to deny the aforementioned knowledge [of unity-of-being] and oppose [those who assert the truth of unity-of-being].

Another experience involved me fighting diseases a few times, which had effects. In the same way, the conditions of some deceased persons appeared from the liminal world (*'alam-i barzakhat*),²⁵ and I alleviated their pain and distress. But now I have no more ability to concentrate on that or anything else. I had some misfortunes and ill treatment from people. There were many associated with me who were unjustly destroyed and forced to leave their homes. Basically no distress or affliction reached my heart, even where they had done harm.

Some companions who are in the station of attraction to God have talked about their inner knowledge and contemplative witnessing without having even made one step toward stations of the path. They do not have the slightest experience of the states of these way stations. It is hoped that God almighty will bless them with the good fortune of wayfaring after all the aspects of being attracted to God [are finished].

Shaykh Nur (from these aforementioned companions) is stuck in this station. He has not arrived at the upper point in the station of attraction to God. He finds difficulty both in action and in rest and does not understand the harm [to himself]. Automatically he is stopped in his tracks. Likewise, most of his companions, due to a lack of guidance in behaving beautifully (*adab*), have become stuck in their spiritual work. In this spiritual work it is surprising, from my point of view, how they get stuck when their intention is to develop themselves. It happens that they delay the spiritual work without intending to. Otherwise, the path is quite near. Shaykh Nur has gone to the lowest point. The activity of attraction to God has brought him to the end where he has arrived at the interface (*barzakh*) of that station. He was brought above, from the surface to the end [of the station] where the first attributes [appear] along with the constant light of the attributes. He sees himself separate from himself, and finds the shaykh to be annihilated. Then he sees the attributes separated from the Essence. Seeing that, he also arrives at the station of attraction to God. Now both he and the world are lost in a way that cannot be described in words. Whether outwardly in spiritual companionship or deeply hidden inside, one who is proceeding in [the level of isolation and absolute exclusive unity (*ahadiyat-i sirfa*)] will achieve nothing without bewilderment and confusion.

Sayyid Shah Husayn has also arrived near the end point in the station of attraction to God, and his arcane subtle center (*sirr*) has arrived at that point. Similarly, he sees the attributes separate from the Essence but he finds the Essence of the One (*dhat-i ahad*) everywhere. Outwardly he is happy and contented. Likewise, Miyan Ja'far has also arrived near the last point and appears to be very full of desire and lament, a lot like Shah Husayn. Among the other companions who have distinguished themselves are Miyan Shaykhi, Shaykh 'Isa, and Shaykh Kamal who have arrived at the upper point in the station of attraction to God. Shaykh Kamal is proceeding in descent [to the world of creation]. Shaykh Naguri has come below the upper point even though he has a lot of distance yet to go. There are presently eight or nine companions right here who have come up from the bottom point. Some have arrived at the center point facing descent [to the world of creation]. Some of the others are near and others are far.

Shaykh Muzammil finds himself lost and sees the attributes [emanating] from the Origin (*asl*) and the Absolute everywhere. He perceives things in the world like mirages without specific features and finds nothing. Concerning the Mawlana whom we know, it appears that his permission to teach people is a really good idea, but it should be permission suitable to one attracted to God [that is, conditional permission]. There are some remaining matters, which he must benefit from because he has proceeded quickly without stopping. He will go to you (Baqibillah, lit. the Holy Presence), and you can tell him what you think will improve his situation. This poor one has reported whatever understanding has had. The judgment is yours. Khwaja Diya'uddin Muhammad was here a few days. Overall he found presence of God (*hudur*) and tranquility.²⁶ In the end, due to a lack of income and not being at ease, he joined the army.

The son of Mawlana Sher Muhammad is also going into military service. Generally he is present with God and tranquil. He has not progressed due to some hindrances. He is quite arrogant. The servant must know his limits. After writing this letter, a feeling came over me and a state occurred that I couldn't explain in writing. I verified the annihilation of will (*iradat*) and, just like before, the connection of the will became separated from desires. But the origin of the will remained like I have written before.

Now the will also appears from the origin. Neither desire nor will remain. As the form of this annihilation came into view, some knowledge appropriate to this station appeared. It was difficult to write this knowledge down because it was hidden and subtle. I should desist from writing about this knowledge. At the time of verifying this annihilation and overflowing knowledge, a special view beyond oneness (*wahdat*) appeared, although it is established that there is no view beyond oneness because there is not any affinity (*nisbat*). But I have reported what I have experienced. As long as I am not certain, I will not write boldly. The appearance of this station from beyond oneness is like seeing Agra beyond Delhi. There is no resemblance whatsoever. Whatever is in view is not oneness, nor beyond that, nor a station known by a title of reality, nor a truth known beyond that. Bewilderment and ignorance are the same. I do not feel any superiority from seeing this and do not know what to say. Everything seems to contradict everything else. Nothing comes for me to say. Surely this state resembles no other. God forgive me. I repent to God all that God dislikes—in speech, in deed, in thought, and in what is seen.

And also this time I have come to know that what I had thought to be annihilation of the attributes was in truth the annihilation of the characteristics of the attributes and their distinctions. [This happened] while the attributes became included in oneness and [other] characteristics became extinguished. Now the origin of the attributes has disappeared, as if one could be included in the other. Nothing remains of the predominance of exclusive unity. Nothing remains of any distinction from the level of comprehensive or detailed knowledge that I had realized. My entire vision has become focused on the outside world (*bar kharaj*). [According to the hadith], God was and with God there was nothing else.²⁷ He is now as

God always has been. This time my knowledge corresponds with my state. Before, I mentioned knowledge with this meaning but without experiencing the state. I hope that you will alert me to what is correct and what is in error. In addition, there is Mawlana Qasim 'Ali who has realized the station of completion as well as some companions here. God almighty knows best concerning the reality of my state.

LETTER 1.13: SIRHINDI'S FURTHER CONTEMPLATIVE DEVELOPMENT

In this letter, Ahmad Sirhindi was writing to his shaykh, Baqibillah.²⁸ He explained to Baqibillah how he had ascended to annihilation in God and descended while abiding in God. Transformed by his experience, Sirhindi has returned to the material world. He has completed his journey in lesser intimacy with God (*walayāt-i suḡhra*) in the shadows of God's names and attributes. From the letter, it seems that he was still getting his bearings. Outwardly Sirhindi appeared to be an ordinary person, but inwardly his reality was extraordinary because inwardly he was with God. The five thousand year journey refers to the time it takes a non-Mujaddidi Sufi, through the exercise of the personal will, to purify the elements and the ego-self through daily spiritual exercises. As outlined in the previous letter, Sirhindi had annihilated all will and desire to follow the path of spiritual companionship with his completed/perfected shaykh — which is the fast track.

The phrases “All is God.” or “All is from God.” have become shorthand for experiencing the (ontological) unity-of-being (*wahdat-i wujud*) or contemplatively witnessing the unity of being (*wahdat-i shuhud*). When Sirhindi uses the term *wahdat-i wujud*, it is to designate the Sufi experience of *wujudis* who deny multiplicity in their assertion of the ontological unity-of-being. He proposes *wahdat-i shuhud* to balance this partial truth. Sirhindi experienced the unity-of-being as an elementary stage superseded by the experience of the attributes of creation being the shadow of God's attributes.

This letter has Sirhindi declaring that there is no contradiction between the outer shari'at (the Persian form of shari'a) and his inner experiences. In the study of contemplative practice and religious experience, this is a significant move because it signifies that human-created-in-history shari'at is the criterion to evaluate postrational, inner experience. For Sirhindi, an inner experience was ultimately valid only if it conformed to the creedal and orthopraxic Muslim Sunni Hanafi dictates of shari'at. Such a stance was quite appropriate in an environment in which society is governed by the shari'at, but in light of the apparently larger context of cross-cultural religious experience and consciousness studies, other issues are involved. If the way to God is endless, then it means that the shari'at necessarily has to follow suit, for the infinite cannot be contained by the finite. Herein lies a much larger notion of shari'at.

Translation

LETTER 1.13

The lowest of servants, Ahmad, exclaims one thousand and one ‘ahs’ of lament from realizing that the way to God is endless. Proceeding [along the way] has happened with such speed, with so many events, and with copious divine favor. Thus, the great shaykhs have declared that wayfaring to God (*sayr ila Allah*) is a journey of five thousand years. “The angels and the Spirit ascend to God in a day of fifty thousand years” [Q. 70:4]. This verse alludes to when I feel discouraged in spiritual work and my hopes are extinguished. The Qur’anic verse, “It is God who sends down the saving rain after they have despaired and spreads out God’s mercy” [Q. 42:28] gives me hope.

It has been a few days since I have experienced wayfaring in the world as an ordinary person (lit., wayfaring in the things of the world, *sayr fi’l-ashya*). Again, people wanting Sufi teaching have been flooding in, and generally I have begun teaching them. But still I do not find myself worthy of the station of completion to guide others. People’s insistence causes me not to say anything because of shyness and politeness.

Previously, I have repeatedly told you about how I was bogged down with the issue of asserting the unity-of-being (*tawhid-i wujudi*) along with actions and attributes being connected with the source (*asl*).²⁹ When the truth of the matter became known, I emerged from being stuck. I experienced the adage “All is from God” prevailing. I saw more completeness in this than the saying, “All is God.” I knew God’s creation (*af’al*) and God’s attributes from a different perspective. Everything [was shown to me as it] passed above one by one, and my doubt completely disappeared. All that has been disclosed (*kashifiyat*) corresponds to the outer shari’at without even the slightest contradiction. Sufis who contradict the outer shari’at do so on the basis of what is disclosed to them, whether in sobriety or intoxication. There is no contradiction between the inner and the outer.

The contradictions that appear to those traversing the path need to be faced and resolved. The true realized one (*muntahi-yi haqiqi*) finds that inner experience corresponds to the outer shari’at. The difference between the [superficial] jurists and the noble Sufis is that jurists know [topics of shari’at] by rational proof and the Sufis know by their inner disclosures and by tasting. What is greater proof of Sufis’ sound condition than this correspondence (between their experience and the shari’at)? “I will get upset and be quiet” [Q. 26:13] is how I feel now. I do not know what to say. I do not have the inclination to write about these states, nor is it possible to fit them in a letter. Perhaps there has been some wisdom in this. Please do not deprive this unfortunate one of your exceptional spiritual attention (*tawajjuh*) or leave me alone on the path. You were the starting point of these words. If there is verbosity, then you are the cause. It is better not to show any more arrogance. The servant should know his limits.

NOTES

1. All references to Sirhindi's *Collected Letters* are from *Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani*, 3 vols., ed. by Nur Ahmad (Karachi: Educational Press, 1972).
2. This is detailed in Arthur Buehler, *Revealed Grace: The Juristic Sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624)* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011), letter 1.290.
3. See "Ahmad Sirhindi: Nationalist Hero, Good Sufi, or Bad Sufi?," in *Sufism in South Asia*, ed. by Clinton Bennett (London: Continuum, 2012), 141–62.
4. There are twenty letters addressed to Baqibillah in *Collected Letters*.
5. This experience is detailed in letter 1.7.
6. Sirhindi addresses these issues further in letters 1.220, 1.257, and 1.292, all of which are translated in Buehler, *Revealed Grace*.
7. Jahangir, *Memoirs of Jahangir (Tuzuk-i Jahangiri)*, ed. Henry Beveridge, trans. Alexander Rogers (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968), 2:93.
8. St. John of the Cross (d. 1591 in Segovia, Spain) refers to the "dark night" and is the eighth of ten stages in his schema of spiritual ascent. In transpersonal psychology, it refers to the relinquishment of a separate ego-self after many years of spiritual effort.
9. See Muhammad Sa'id Ahmad Mujaddidi, *al-Bayyinat: Sharh-i Maktubat* (Lahore: Tanzim al-Islam, 2002), 369. This is the best commentary on *Collected Letters*, but it only goes up to 1.29. The author comments on this subject further in his commentary at 331–33 using Mazhar Jan-i Janan's letter mentioned below.
10. See Mujaddidi, *al-Bayyinat*, 385. This is discussed further in letter 1.287 found in Buehler, *Revealed Grace*.
11. The information given in *Collected Letters* and in the commentaries about the disclosure of the Essence, including the necessity of having a Muhammadan disposition, corresponds with the definition and explanation of the same term (*al-tajalliyat al-dhatiya*) given in 'Abdurrazzaq Kashani's *Lata'if al-'ilam fi isharat ahl al-ilham*, ed. Sa'id 'Abdulfattah (Cairo: National Library Press, 1996), 309–10. In terms of Sirhindi's experiences of abiding in God after the annihilation of the ego-self, such an experience characterizes the experience of an Essential disclosure of God. See Muhammad Dhawqi, *Sirr-i dilbaran*, 4th ed. (Karachi: Mashhur Offset Press, 1985), 115.
12. See Letter 2.67 in Buehler, *Revealed Grace*.
13. In this translation, parenthesis (indicate additional information) and brackets [indicate words not in the original text added for clarity].
14. The first path is Sirhindi's situation during his first experience, which is outlined in letter 1.7; later on in the letter translated here (1.11) he goes on to thank his shaykh for being on the second path.
15. In the Islamic tradition, each person has an angel over the right shoulder recording one's good deeds and another angel over the left shoulder recording one's bad deeds.
16. A very detailed explanation of this experience is found in Mirza Jan-i Janan's ninth letter in Ghulam 'Ali Dihlawi, *Maqamat-i mahzari*, Urdu trans. Iqbal Mujaddidi (Lahore: Zarin Art Press, 1983), 387–88. In short, Sirhindi was in such a place that when he

looked inside himself all he could see was his “dark side” (lit., evil side, *jihat-i sharr*) in such a way that it appeared that he was absolutely devoid of any perfections or admirable qualities.

17. The text states “the one with the two lights,” referring to ‘Uthman’s two successive wives, Ruqiyya and Umm Kulthum, both of whom were daughters of the Prophet.
18. The interlinear text states that Sirhindi experienced the station by passing through it instead of being stabilized in this station.
19. Here the shaykhs refer to Baha’uddin’s teachers, not everyone in the lineage preceding him. In note eleven in *Collected Letters* 1.11.23 the editor states that Sirhindi was with these shaykhs as a son is with his father, as a seeker is with his spiritual master, or as a student is with his teacher.
20. This is ‘Abdurrahman Jami’s *Nafahat al-uns*.
21. See ‘Abdurrahman Jami, *Nafahat al-uns*, 308. The disappearance of the entity (*‘ayn*) is discussed in detail in letter 1.287 in Buehler, *Revealed Grace*.
22. The interlinear notes translate this Qur’anic passage as “neither Essence nor attribute.”
23. It does not appear that Abu Sa’id discussed the disclosure of the essence in the *Nafahat al-uns*, although there are discussions of this subject by other shaykhs in ‘Abdurrahman Jami’s, *Nafahat al-uns min hadarat al-quds*, ed. Mahmud ‘Abidi (Tehran: Intisharat-i Ittila’at, 1992), 410, 555. Footnote 11 on 1.11.23 in *Collected Letters* adds the technical description of the experience in question, that is, a flashing disclosure of Essence. There is a further discussion of this type of experience in 1.21 and 1.27 in *Collected Letters*.
24. These are the subtle centers and entifications mentioned in the introduction to these two essays.
25. This *barzakh* is the in-between place between this world and the next, probably located in the world of the spirits, commonly called the world of command.
26. Technically *hudur* means being present with God in the station of oneness. Ordinarily it can mean “ease.”
27. This hadith is found in al-Bukhari, *Bad’ al-khalq*, 1, *Tawhid*, 22; and al-Nasa’i, *al-Sunan al-kubra*, # 11240. All specific hadith references in this chapter come from *Mektubat-i Rabbani*, trans. into Turkish by Talha Hakan Alp, Omer Faruk Tokat, and Ahmet Hamdi Yildirim (Istanbul: Semerkand Yayınları, 2004).
28. There are twenty letters addressed to Baqibillah in *Collected Letters*.
29. The text simply has *tawhid*, but the context and the interlinear note clearly indicate that *tawhid-i wujudi* is intended.

FURTHER READING

- Buehler, Arthur F. *Revealed Grace: The Juristic Sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624)*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011.
- Friedmann, Yohanan. *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1971.
- Haar, J. G. J. ter. *Follower and Heir of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624) as Mystic*. Leiden: Het Oosters Instituut, 1992.

PART II. Political Culture



FIGURE 4.1 *The Coffin of Imam 'Ali*

This illustration from a mid-sixteenth century manuscript of the *Falnama* (Book of Omens) depicts an Anatolian spiritual legend according to which Imam 'Ali (shown veiled, leading the camel) predicts his own death and reveals the details of his funeral procession to his sons Hasan and Husain (the figures behind the hillside). He urges his sons not to seek answers from the veiled man. Unable to resist, they ask for the man's identity and learn that it is indeed their father, who is carrying his own corpse to the grave.

Source: Folio from a *Falnama* (The Book of Omens) of Ja'far al-Sadiq

Date: Mid-1550s–early 1560s

Place of origin: Attributed to Qazvin, Iran

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Francis M. Weld, 1950. 50.23.2.

4. Conceptions of Sovereignty: The Poet, the Scholar, and the Court Sufi

Those who participated in the high politics of their state continued to find ways to deal with the evolving challenges to the legitimacy of the ruling families they served. A shared ethos of Muslim kingship with its pre-Islamic legacy, authoritative sources such as the Qur'an and the hadith corpus and their varied interpretations, and the political language of Islam used to formulate responses to political crises, connected the political cultures of the three empires. This chapter includes the views of thinkers attached to the three imperial courts who attempted to articulate how their respective dynasts expressed their message of sovereignty and legitimized their rule to the people.

In the first essay, Hani Khafipour examines the Safavid house's claim to religious-political authority during the formative period of the dynasty as revealed in the works of a sixteenth century Safavid courtier, the poet bureaucrat 'Abdi Beg Shirazi. A strong legitimating pillar in Muslim kingship was having a revered line of descent. While many powerful houses of the era, such as the Ottomans and the Mughals, claimed to have had legendary ancestors in order to strengthen their legitimacy, the Safavid house alone claimed that they were descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fatimah and cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, the first of the Shi'i imams. This was a powerful statement when used for political ascendancy. One can imagine in the European context how potent the idea would be if a political-military house could rightfully claim descent from Jesus of Nazareth. In his chronicle *Addendum to History* (*Takmilat al-Akhbar*), penned in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and excerpted below, 'Abdi Beg demonstrates how the Safavid house viewed themselves as the legitimate rulers of the Muslim community.

In the second essay, Hüseyin Yılmaz examines the political thought of two sixteenth century scholars and jurists, Idris Bitlisi, who left Iran after the rise of the Safavids and was welcomed at the Ottoman court, and Hasan Kafi, who was a provincial Ottoman judge in the Balkans. Bitlisi became one of the most influential thinkers for the Ottoman Empire. In an era of competing imperial legitimacies, Bitlisi, in his *The Law of King of Kings* (*Qanun-i Shahanshahi*) excerpted here, attempts to recast the Ottoman universal claim to sovereignty by relying on a host of intellectual streams, including Sufism and the teachings of the philosopher al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191), the founder of an Illuminationist (*Ishraqi*) philosophical tradition.

The imperial judge, Hasan Kafi, almost a century later in his *Elements of Wisdom for the Order of the World* (*Usulu'l-Hikem fi Nizami'l-Alem*) shifts the burden of justice and social order away from the ruler and onto the society. By the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire was nearly three hundred years old, and many political thinkers began to observe signs of decline in the power of the state and wrote about it. Hasan Kafi, for example, offers to reveal the causes as well as the solutions for the restoration of the Ottoman power and justice. In the *Elements of Wisdom*, part of which is translated below, he views the role of the ruler primarily as the guardian of the four social orders (men of sword, men of pen, the peasants, and craftsmen and merchants) and posits that unless the social orders are preserved based on the proven laws and tradition, and meritocracy upheld, the empire will face collapse.

As in the Safavid and Ottoman lands, the influence of Sufi thought on Mughal political ideology at the center of power was indeed immense. In the third essay, Azfar Moin explores the Mughal claims of sovereignty as reflected in the thought of the seventeenth century Sufi 'Abd al-Rahman of the Chishti Order, who served as a spiritual adviser in the court of the Emperor Shah Jahan (d. 1666). The court and the Chishtis over the years had developed a symbiotic relationship in that the order legitimized the Mughal kingship while the court supported the order's agenda for religious co-existence among Muslims, Hindus, and other religions—a tradition dating back to the thirteenth century and later upheld by Emperor Akbar (d. 1605) who adopted the famed Sufi master Shaykh Mu'in al-Din (d. 1236) as the dynasty's spiritual patron. In his *Mirror of Secrets* (*Mir'at al-Asrar*) excerpted and translated below, 'Abd al-Rahman endorses the Mughal Emperor's cosmological position as the second "Lord of Auspicious Conjunction" (the first Lord being the Mughal house's ancestor, the powerful Central Asian conqueror Timur (d. 1405)) whose greatness was predestined and astrologically confirmed with the alignment of Saturn and Jupiter. Moreover, he praises the policy of Universal Peace (*Sulh-i Kull*) that Shah Jahan continue to uphold, a policy inaugurated by Emperor Akbar that occasioned a controversial realignment of Islam as the dominant faith vis-à-vis other religions of the empire.

I. The Safavid Claim to Sovereignty According to a Court Bureaucrat

HANI KHAFIPOUR

A COURTIER AND HIS TIME

‘Abdi Beg Shirazi (1513–1580) was one of the leading court poets of sixteenth-century Iran. He first entered the court with the help of a family connection at the age of sixteen to work as a junior accountant in the emerging Safavid bureaucracy.¹ This entry carved out for him a career path in the service of the court. He rose through the bureaucratic ranks and eventually became the comptroller in the central administration.² During this time he also refined his literary skills and became a notable poet among Safavid court society.

In an attempt to keep his spirit alive amidst the tedium of auditing state finances, ‘Abdi Beg began composing love sonnets (*ghazaliyat*) and quatrains (*ruba‘iyat*). Later he composed longer works (*mathnavis*, rhyming couplets) for which he is mostly known. Among his better-known poetic works were *Jawhar-i Fard*, *Jannat al-Athmar*, and *Rawzat as-Safat*.³ The latter work is a verse description of the new Safavid palace pavilion built for the royal family in Qazvin when the city became the second capital around 1548. This is one of the few descriptions of the royal district that remain; most others have been lost. As a poet immersed in Sufi and Shi‘i traditions and in the service of a dynasty that embodied both, ‘Abdi Beg’s poetry has a particular mystical undertone that is mixed with Shi‘i religious-political ideology.⁴

Among his lasting achievements in the bureaucracy, ‘Abdi Beg carried out an extensive audit of the Safavid family’s endowments (*awqaf*) in their ancestral town

of Ardabil, which included vast landholdings and commercial assets.⁵ The report that he left behind, known as *Sarih al-Mulk*, is an invaluable source for socio-economic history of the town.

Toward the end of his career, 'Abdi Beg penned an important chronicle, *Takmilat al-Akhbar* (*Addendum to History*), and adorned it with beautiful stanzas and couplets. In the opening of the chronicle translated and annotated below, 'Abdi Beg offers his readers the Safavid house's sanctioned view regarding the issue of their legitimacy. He completed the work in 1571 when the dynasty's religio-political ideology had taken root as a result of Shah Tahmasb's policies of supporting the growth of Shi'ism during his exceptionally long reign (1524–1576).

'Abdi Beg dedicated the work to Shah Tahmasb's second daughter, Pari Khan Khanum (d. 1578).⁶ In addition to her patronage of intellectuals and philanthropic activities, Pari Khan Khanum was a formidable political force at court. In the mayhem that followed the death of Shah Tahmasb, she managed to secure the throne for both of her brothers. First for Ismail Mirza (later Shah Ismail II, r. 1576–1577), who had been imprisoned for nearly twenty years in the castle of Qahqahah. Ismail II was poisoned a year later, and she then orchestrated Muhammad Khudabandah's accession (later Shah Sultan Muhammad Khudabandah, r. 1578–1587). Khudabandah was nearly blind and without influence and power in Qazvin, making his sister the de facto ruler, bringing to light the motive for supporting his bid for the crown. His disability, however, was assuaged by the presence of his wife and the new queen, Mahd-i Awliya (d. 1579). Unfortunately for Pari Khan Khanum, Mahd-i Awliya was as shrewd as she was brutal. For all of her political clout, Pari Khan Khanum was no match for the new queen. On the day of their arrival to the capital to inaugurate the new reign, Mahd-i Awliya arranged for Pari Khan Khanum's execution. The man assigned to the task was none other than Pari Khan Khanum's childhood royal tutor (*lalah*), Khalil Khan Afshar.⁷

In a cruel cycle of violence, Mahd-i Awliya herself fell victim to the shifting tides of power and was strangled to death a few years later. Shah 'Abbas (r. 1588–1629), arguably the ablest of the Safavid rulers, was her son.

'Abdi Beg, like many of his peers at court, was vulnerable to the vicissitudes of political life. The center of political power is a volatile place, dominated by factional rivalries, and more than a few bureaucrats and intellectuals fell victim to plots and power shifts.⁸ Others, such as the bureaucrat/historian Budaq Munshi, who wrote the *Jewels of History* (*Javahir al-Akhbar*), had a long career in the high administration (he was once a chief secretary to the governor of Baghdad, Muhammad Khan) but then endured intermittent imprisonment and finally died in poverty.⁹ Budaq Munshi fared slightly better than Yahya Qazvini, who wrote the chronicle *Lubb al-Tavarikh*. Qazvini's crime was unclear, but he was thrown into a cell, never again to see the light of day.¹⁰ In 1565, after nearly four decades in service, 'Abdi Beg fell out of favor and was dismissed.¹¹ Soon thereafter he left the capital with his family to live in Ardabil and to devote himself, as he put it, "to the study of the religious sciences." 'Abdi Beg briefly

returned to the capital years later, only to leave once more and never to return. He died in Ardabil in 1580.¹²

The later sixteenth century saw an upsurge of interest in historiography at the Safavid court. The royal house and the elite wanted to know and record their achievements and to preserve their legacy for the next generation. ‘Abdi Beg’s *Takmilat al-Akhbar* should be viewed against this backdrop. Two other historian/bureaucrat contemporaries of ‘Abdi Be produced histories: Hasan Beg Rumlu (b. 1530–31), a high-ranking Qizilbash officer and a member of the Shah’s guards (*qurchi*), authored *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*; and Qazi Ahmad Ghafari (d. 1567) penned the chronicle, *Tarikh-i Jahan-Ara*.¹³

‘Abdi Beg’s chronicle exemplifies the style of many “official” dynastic histories written for the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal ruling families during the early modern period. By aggrandizing their affairs and glossing over or justifying their tyrannies, he helped propagate an approved political narrative. In the absence of gazettes and newspapers of the later centuries, chronicles such as these served the purpose of recording the major political and religious events of the era, such as conquests, uprisings, key state appointments, ambassadorial missions, and various occurrences crucial for an understanding of the period.¹⁴ Thus, court chronicles heavily recorded the history of the political and religious elite at the expense of recording the affairs of other segments of society, such as the activities of peasants, merchants, and artisans. Despite their elitist slant, these chronicles contain a wealth of information and offer clues to the religious and political currents continuously at work in transforming the era’s intellectual landscape. In this respect, ‘Abdi Beg’s chronicle provides valuable insight into the Safavid political culture and various strategies that it used to persuade its powerful rivals abroad (e.g., the Ottoman and Mughal courts), as well as a large population at home, of its claim to sovereignty.

‘ABDI BEG AND THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY RELIGIO-POLITICAL CLIMATE

Within a decade after being declared the ruler of Azerbaijan in the city of Tabriz, Ismail (r. 1501–1524), son of Haydar Safavi (d. 1488), led a series of spectacular military victories and became the indisputable Shah of Iran. The Safavid house formulated their legitimacy to rule over the population mainly based on one key tenet: their alleged descent from the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632) through his daughter Fatimah (d. 633) and his cousin and son-in law ‘Ali (d. 661).

The implications of this Shi‘i claim to religio-political authority overlapped with the more extreme views (*ghulat*) of the Safavid house’s military supporters, the Qizilbash confederates. The perception of the Safavid house’s claims to sovereignty (especially at the time of Shah Ismail’s rise to power) among the Qizilbash tribes developed in a milieu of undisciplined religiosity, thaumaturgic shamanism, undefined Sufi practices, and heightened apocalyptic expectations in the region.

Added to this *mélange* was the widespread reverence of the Shi'i imams—especially Imam 'Ali—and belief in the doctrine of *tanasukh* (metempsychosis), the possibility of transmigration of holy men's souls (particularly that of Imam 'Ali's and his son, Husain's) into the body of a chosen leader. As such, a leader's claim to authority would be strengthened if he linked his descent to 'Ali and was able to gain wide support for it (as did the Safavid leaders by the late fifteenth century). Vincentio D'Alessandri, an Italian who visited Iran in the 1570s, perfectly captured this popular sentiment when he wrote,

The reverence and love of the people for the king, not withstanding the things mentioned above, which make one think he ought to be hated, are incredible, as they worship him not as a king, but as a god, on account of his descent from the line of Ali, the great object of their veneration. Those who are in sickness or in hardship do not call to aid the name of God so much as that of the king [Shah Tahmasb at the time], making vows to present him with some gift, and some go to kiss the doors of the palace.¹⁵

Initially, this perception amplified the Qizilbash supporters' loyalty to one another and to their Safavid shahs and the cause they came to symbolize. However, during the institutionalization period of the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, the court perceived the extreme views of the Qizilbash as an impediment to its hegemonic drive and rigorously suppressed it with the help of the growing Shi'i clerical establishment who advocated for a more robust legalism and orthopraxy.

The Safavid's descent from the revered fourteenth-century mystic Shaykh Safi al-Din Ishaq Ardabili (d. 1334) had given Ismail's grandfather Junayd (d. 1460) and father Haydar an aura of holiness in the eyes of their Turkomen followers, and their house's union with the powerful Aqqyunlu ruler Uzan Hasan (d. 1478) through intermarriage (Uzun Hasan was Ismail's maternal grandfather) added to their prestige and won them a number of military allies. These ties served to reinforce the Safavid's central claim to kingship as direct descendants of the Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*). The assertion provided the necessary ideological thrust to forge their declaration of sovereignty, and it help them monopolize the paramount Shi'i ideology to religio-political authority. Accordingly, the Safavid house and the literati in their service, such as 'Abdi Beg, highlighted their shah's holy lineage and traced their descent through the seventh imam, Musa al-Kazim (d. c. 790s) in their chronicles.

The authenticity of the Safavid house's claim to be descendants of the *ahl al-bayt* by way of 'Ali has long been a subject of investigation.¹⁶ Even the early Safavids themselves were aware that others doubted their acclaimed ancestry.¹⁷ A sayyidid lineage was not something one could easily forge, especially for prominent families with political aspirations. Textual verification was often necessary.¹⁸ The Ottoman 'ulama' were most vocal concerning the Safavid lineage. For example, a question put forth to the Ottoman shaykh al-Islam Ebu's-Su'ud Efendi in order to obtain a

religious ruling (fatwa), reads: "It is said that their leader is a descendant of the messenger of God [Muhammad], peace and prayer be upon him. If this is true, can there be any doubt [that Ismail is an unbeliever (that is, kafir)]? He answers the question:

No, not at all. Their wicked acts demonstrate that they do not have any relationship with this pure genealogy. In addition, reliable people reported that when his father, Ismail, first went out [for his political bid], he pressured the descendants of the Prophet in the tomb of Imam Ali al-Rida ibn Musa al-Kazim and other places to include his [Ismail's] name in [the book] *Bahr-i Ansab*.¹⁹

Ebu's-Su'ud Efendi's response reflects the Ottoman court's refutation of their rival's pillar of legitimization in an era of intense ideological clashes regarding the true universal Muslim sovereignty. It was, in fact, challenging for the early Safavids to substantiate their sacred descent. They even had a difficult time proving that their eponymic ancestor Shaykh Safi al-Din was not a Sunni. This had the grave implication that he might have followed one of the four Sunni schools, like many Sufi shaykhs of the time, without an ancestral link to the ahl al-bayt and thereby divesting his progeny of their legitimating principle.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth-century religious climate, Shi'i/Sunni demarcations were blurred, but by the sixteenth century the distinction became exceedingly political due to the expansion of the Safavid power. Consequently, the Safavids made efforts to put the questions of their ancestry to rest. Under Shah Tahmasb, whose authority was exceptionally weak in the first half of the sixteenth century as a result of several wars with the Ottomans and the Uzbeks as well as internal challenge to his rule, the court commissioned works that highlighted the family's sacred ancestry and to establish, once and for all, a clear 'Alid descent.²⁰

The Safavid fixation with having a sacred lineage partly stemmed from the eschatology inherent in popular Shi'i political thought of the time that a king would at last emerge who would be a descendant of the Shi'i imams and who would restore the justice long denied them. It was also partly based on the idea that such a person, due to the nature of his sacred lineage, would be virtuous and incorruptible in contrast to previous non-sayyid, non-Shi'i rulers who were often vilified as corrupt and immoral. When 'Abdi Beg writes, "since the time when the accursed Mu'awiyah (d. 680) began [his] perversion, tyrannical rulers established themselves and did not confer authority to *Bani Fatimah*," he is alluding to this view.

The Imamite theory of political authority rests on the idea that a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad is most qualified to lead the Muslim community, not merely due to descent but also due to the assumption that such an individual, through esoteric training, had become privy to divine knowledge that allowed them access to certain truths not revealed to others. Legitimate authority seems to have become intimately tied to the notion of infallibility as early as the time

of Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (d. 765). The idea then developed that the rightful Shi‘i leader, having gained divine knowledge, becomes infallible (*ma‘sum*), rendering his interpretation of divine revelation in religious, as well as political matters, authoritative.²¹

In the Twelver-Shi‘i tradition, however, the last of the infallible imams, al-Mahdi al-Hujja, went into occultation (*ghayba*) in 878. In his absence, most Shi‘i ‘ulama’ claimed that all other rulers are to be regarded as illegitimate. This led to a bitter conflict at the heart of the Safavid struggle for legitimacy that divided the ‘ulama’. How could the Shi‘i ‘ulama’ justify the Safavids’ right to rule?

This was not an easy problem to resolve during the formative period of the dynasty in the early sixteenth century. Shah Tahmasb, the second Safavid ruler and ‘Abdi Beg’s chief patron, was particularly concerned with his religio-political authority highlighted his divine role as a Shi‘i ruler and protector of the Divine Law (*shari‘a*) and patronized members of the ‘ulama’ who endorsed his rule. For example, in a royal decree Tahmasb conferred extensive religio-political authority to the leading Shi‘i scholar of the time, Shaykh ‘Ali al-Karaki (d. 1534), and portrayed himself as heir to the legacy of the infallible imams to strengthen his claim.²²

Subsequent Shi‘i ‘ulama’, such as Muhammad Baqir Sabzavari (d. 1679), flourishing at a time when the dynasty’s claim to authority was no longer a contested issue, resolved the legitimization-during-occultation conflict by espousing the view that the hidden imam’s divine benevolence continues to benefit the believers even during his absence. As he put it,

The absolute king (*padishah-i mutlaq*) and the leader (*imam*) is sometimes a prophet like Adam, Solomon, David, Muhammad, and others;²³ and sometimes they are other than prophets, such as imam ‘Ali and the other Shi‘i imams (God’s peace be upon them). In no time will the world be devoid of the true imam, but sometimes because of prudence and judiciousness (*hikmat-ha va maslahat-ha*), the true imam is absent and impossible for anyone to serve him, but from the grace of his existence this world flourishes and his benefits continue to reach all beings. The analogy is the sun that is hidden behind the clouds whose benefit and brightness is clear and evident.²⁴

By focusing on the “grace” of the hidden imam, Sabzavari frames the thorny issue of accepting Safavid religio-political authority during the occultation as one of *maslaha* (judiciousness), originally a juridical concept that gradually came to connote “public interest” and was often evoked to justify a variety of political actions “for the community’s well-being.”²⁵

‘Abdi Beg, however, was not a theologian and does not seem concerned with doctrinal ambiguities in the Safavid house’s claim to religio-political authority. Instead, the explanation he offers us in his chronicle regarding his patron’s declaration of sovereignty is a populist interpretation of legitimate authority among Shi‘is, one that avoids the troubling contradictions and one that the intelligentsia at court, as well as laymen, could accept.²⁶ Thus, as ‘Abdi Beg explains in the

excerpt translated below,²⁷ Shah Ismail and the rest of the Safavid house, by virtue of being descendants of the Prophet, are in effect his rightful successors to lead the community and are the ones to correct centuries of oppression perpetuated by tyrannical caliphs.

TRANSLATION

Excerpts from 'Abdi Beg Shirazi's Takmilat al-Akhbar

Once fortune (*dawla*)²⁸ chooses someone,
It will make him triumphant for his realm and faith
Fortune is a royal phoenix of prosperity
Shadowing the shadow of God
It is an exultant nebular, a precious ornament
Dazzling the Universe like a spring cloud
Once fortune becomes someone's companion
He will become the leader of his faith and world
The head that is deserving of a crown
May it first be endorsed from the gate of faith.

It is clear and self-evident upon sacred consciences and primary insights that the purpose of the commencement of the world and the creation as evident [by the message] "I was a treasure unknown, then I desired to be known, [so, I created a creation to which I made Myself known; then they knew Me]"²⁹ that the first creation (*makhluq*) as revealed in the opening of the Book (that is, the *Qur'an*) is the holy light of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632). The appointment of worldly sovereignty is therefore consigned to the compassionate messenger (Muhammad) who is the essence of the Universe, and after him to the Commander of the Faithful (that is, imam 'Ali, d. 661), who is favored by God as well as the Prophet, for the leadership of all creation.

After his holiness, this supreme position is assigned to the twelve blessed Shi'i imams in perpetuity, and whoever beyond these individuals interferes with this design is an oppressor (*ja'ir*).³⁰ Since the Lord of the Age (Sultan-i Zaman, that is, the twelfth Shi'i imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Hujjah, disappeared in 878) is in occultation, justice dictates that a descendant from the house of 'Ali and Fatima (d. 633) who is suitable for this duty [should arise] to implement the decree of the Lord of the Age among God's servants, to return them from corruption and depravity, to guide them toward God's true religion of twelver [Shi'ism], and to ascend the throne and execute the Prophet Muhammad's Divine directives. Just as the Prophet, may God's blessings be upon him, has said:

We have a treasure in Taliqan,³¹ not in gold, and not in silver, but in twelve thousand men led by a young man of the Banu Hashim,³² upon whose head is tied a red band,³³ [making it] as

though I can see him across the Euphrates. Their banner is Allah, Allah, Allah, if he appears, they hasten toward him, even if called to arms.³⁴

Similarly, his holiness, the Commander of the Faithful (that is, 'Ali), may God's peace be upon him, has declared, and [because it] has been alluded to in the introduction to the Life of Hulegu Khan, [?] it will also be repeated here once again:

The Kingdom of Banu 'Abbas³⁵ is one of ease and not difficulty, if the Turks, Daylamites,³⁶ Sindis,³⁷ Hindis,³⁸ Berbers,³⁹ and Tabaristanis⁴⁰ gather against them with the intention of eliminating their rule, they will never be able to; they will never remove [their kingdom] until it is recalled by their clients and governors, and a Turkish king has gained influence over them, who hails from whence their kingdom began. He shall not pass by a city that he does not conquer, and when his banner is raised it will result in the infliction of woe upon those he so intends, and it will remain so. He will appear and drive victory for a man of my descent, who speaks the truth and works toward it.⁴¹

And this hadith is the truth. When sovereignty was easily granted to the 'Abbasid house (750–1258) by Abu Muslim Marvazi (d. 755), the Saljuq Turks, the Daylamites, Mahmud of Ghazna (d. 1030) the conqueror of Hindustan, and all others failed to bring about its demise. At last, the dynasty was eradicated at the hands of Hulegu the Turk (the founder of the Ilkhanid dynasty, d. 1265) with the aid of Caliph Musta'sim's (d. 1258) minister Ibn Al-'alqami, and other 'Abbasid grantees. After that, succession did not transfer from the house of Hulegu to anyone belonging to the household of the Commander of the Faithful save for the majestic Safavid house (1501–1736), when Shah Ismail (d. 1524) subjugated the world. He announced the truth in the sermon (*khutbah*) of the twelve Shi'i imams, and its truthfulness succeeded in refuting the enemies. And, this he did in truth, meaning, he overthrew *kharaajits* and Sunnis who adhered to flawed beliefs and erroneous deeds. No one from the Fatimid house (that is, the progeny of Fatimah, Muhammad's daughter) had attained such an achievement.⁴²

Since the time when the accursed Mu'awiyah (d. 680) began [his] perversion, tyrannical rulers established themselves and did not confer authority to *Bani Fatimah*, and thus the Umayyid house (661–750) ruled in opposition to the truth. After them, the 'Abbasid house spoke of freedom and revolution, even though in their time the leaders of house Buyid (945–1055), followers of the truth of Twelver-Shi'ism, tried to wrest sovereignty from them and store it for the Lord of the Age (*Hazrat-i Sahib al-Zaman*). They were unsuccessful.

When the 'Abbasid house was [at last] eliminated, the infidel Mongols and Tatars held sovereignty for a while until Ghazan Khan (d. 1304) was honored with conversion to Islam. After him, the pious Sultan Muhammad Khudabandah Oljeitu (d. 1316) searched and investigated matters and accepted the path of the Twelver-Shi'i faith. He soon departed this world for the abode of paradisiacal

peace, and the path to truth could not be achieved. Following [his death] chaos and disorder reigned until the reality of “Truth has (now) arrived and Falsehood perished,”⁴³ emerged from concealment, and “Of the wrongdoers the last remnant was cut off; praise be to Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds” [Q. 6:45], [thus] the confirmation of the world-conqueror appeared in the mirror of sovereignty. That is to say, the rust of the tyranny of oppression and the dust of abjuration was brushed and abolished from the mirror of the world by the polished sword of the great world-conqueror, the Jamshid of the Alexandrian throne, the Solomon of the end of time, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction (*Padishah-i Sahibqiran*), the vanguard of the army of the Lord of the Age (*Sahib al-Zaman*), the triumphant Shah Ismail son of Sultan Shah Haydar, son of Sultan Junayd, son of Sultan Shaykh Shah Ibrahim, son of Sultan Khvajah ‘Ali, son of Sultan Khvajah Shaykh Sadr al-Din Musa, son of Shaykh Safi al-Din Ishaq, son of Sayyid Amin al-Din Jibra’il, son of Sayyid Salih, son of Sayyid Qutb al-Din, son of Sayyid Salah al-Din Rashid, son of Sayyid Muhammad al-Hafiz, son of Sayyid ‘Avaz al-Khvass, son of Sayyid Firuz-Shah, son of Zarrin Kulah, son of Sayyid Muhammad, son of Sayyid Sharaf-Shah, son of Sayyid Hasan, son of Sayyid Muhammad, son of Sayyid Ibrahim, son of Sayyid Ja‘far, son of Sayyid Muhammad, son of Sayyid Ismail, son of Sayyid Ahmad, son of Sayyid Muhammad A‘rabi, son of Sayyid Muhammad Qasim, son of Abu al-Qasim Hamza, son of Imam Musa, son of Ja‘far al-Kazim, peace and blessing be upon him and his house.

In short, because the signs of world-conquest (*jahan-giri*) and insignia of Shi‘ism were manifested in the [Safavid] house, various kings at the time were continuously observing them [with apprehension], “But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).”⁴⁴

God Almighty through Divine inspiration revealed in the mind of the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction (that is, Shah Ismail) to set forth from Gilan-i Lahi-jan (that is, Eastern Gilan, or Bihah-Pish), where he had taken refuge during childhood because of enemy plots against his life and the uprisings of the Turkoman kings, particularly Rustam (d. 1497) son of Maqsud, son of Hasan Bayunduri (that is, Uzun Hasan, Shah Ismail’s maternal grandfather, d. 1478). [He commanded him to emerge] in order to cleanse the earth of the pollution of religious innovation (*bid‘a*), to mint coin and to deliver a sermon in the name of the twelve Shi‘i imams, and to destroy the idols of the Sunnis like the Prophet Abraham.

At that time, Kar-Kiya Mirza ‘Ali, son of Kar-Kiya Sultan Muhammad, who was one of the Sayyids of the Husainid lineage (Husain, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, d. 680), was the ruler of that region and brought hospitality and servitude [toward Ismail] to perfection. When he became informed [of Ismail’s intention of uprising], he conveyed [to him] that, “at this time, the waxing crescent of the moon of the [Safavid house’s] everlasting sovereignty is merely ascending; delay [your departure] for a while until it reaches the fourteenth night, since [your] age is still thirteen.” That sanctuary of faith (that is, Ismail) replied that, “I have been commanded from the world above and vindicated in this cause.” Thus, from all

directions, victorious Sufis who are now known as the “old Sufis of Gilan” heeded [the call] with fervor. Kar-Kiya then realized that it is no longer possible to conceal the sun from flowers and thus bade him farewell.

NOTES

1. ‘Abdi Beg’s full name is Khvajah Zayn al-‘Abidin ‘Ali, and he went by the penname Navidi. See, for example, his description by Sam Mirza Safavi, Shah Tahmasb’s brother, who was the first to mention him as a poet in his *Tazkirah-yi Tuhfah-yi Sami*, ed. Rukn al-Din Farrukh (Tehran, 1384), 95–96. Variation: *Tuhfah-yi Sami*, ed. Vahid Dastgerdi, (Tehran, 1314), 59.
2. ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi, *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, ed. A. H. Nava’i (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990), 12.
3. ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi, *Rawzat as-Safat*, ed. A. H. Rahimuf (Moscow: Intisharat-i Danish, 1974); ‘Abdi Beg Shiraz, *Jawhar-i Fard*, ed. A. H. Rahimuf (Moscow: Intisharat-i Danish, 1979); ‘Abdi Beg Shiraz, *Jannat al-Athmar; Zinat al-Awraq; Sahifat al-Ikhlās*, ed. A. H. Rahimuf (Moscow: Intisharat-i Danish, 1979). For a brief discussion of ‘Abdi Beg’s life and work, see A. H. Nava’i’s introduction to *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, 7–31. See also Paul Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in ‘Abdi Bayk Shirazi’s Garden of Eden,” *Eurasian Studies: The Skilliter Center-Instituto per l’Oriente Journal for Balkan, Eastern Mediterranean, Anatolian, Middle Eastern, Iranian, and Central Asian Studies* 2 (2003): 1–29.
4. Rasul Ja‘fariyan has pointed out to various readings of ‘Abdi Beg’s poetry. See, for instance, Rasul Ja‘fariyan, *Safaviyah dar ‘Arsa-yi Din, Farhang va Siyasat*, vol. 1 (Tehran, 2000), 493–503.
5. Zayn al-‘Abidin ‘Ali (‘Abdi Beg Shirazi Navidi), *Sarih al-Mulk: Vaqf-namah-i Buq‘ah-i Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili*, ed. Mahmud Muhammad Hidayati (Tehran, 2011).
6. For the life and career of this influential Safavid princess, see, Shohreh Gholisorkhi, “Pari Khan Khanum: A Masterful Safavid Princess,” *Iranian Studies* 28, no. 3/4 (1995): 143–56.
7. Iskandar Beg Munshi, *Tarikh-i ‘Alam-ara-yi ‘Abbasi*, ed. Muhammad I. Rizvani, vol. 1 (Tehran, 1377), 341–48.
8. Safavid chronicles are replete with accounts of fall and executions of ministers alongside their patrons.
9. Budaq Munshi Qazvini, *Javahir al-akhbar*, ed. M. R. Nasiri and Koichi Haneda (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1999). Variation: *Javahir al-akhbar: Bakhsh-i Tarikh-i Iran az Qaraqyunlu ta Sal-i 984 H.Q.*, ed. Muhsin Bahram-nizhad (Tehran: Mirath-i Maktub, 1379/2000). See also Roger Savory, “A Secretarial Career Under Shah Tahmasp I (1524–1576),” *Islamic Studies*, 2, no. 3 (September 1963): 343–52.
10. Qazvini, Yahya ibn ‘Abd al-Latif. *Kitab-i Lubb al-Tavarikh*, ed. Jalal al-Din Tehrani (Tehran: Mu‘assasah-yi Khavar, 1314/1935). Variation 1: *Kitab-i Lubb al-Tavarikh* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Bunyad va Guya, 1984). Variation 2: *Lubb al-Tavarikh*, ed. Mir Hashim Muhaddith Silsilah-yi Intisharat-i Anjuman-i Athar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi (Tehran, 2007).

11. A few Safavid career bureaucrats who were discharged ended up at the Mughal court. Others left either in a self-imposed exile or were forced to flee to find more stability to pursue their activities. Throughout the early modern era, the Mughal court provided a safe haven for Iranian intellectuals who sought to escape the vagaries of Safavid politics, often finding more prestigious and lucrative positions abroad.
12. Shirazi, *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, 127–28.
13. Rumlu, Hasan, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Husain Nava’i (Tehran: Bungah-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitab, 1349/1970. Reprint: 3 vols. (Tehran: Intisharat-i Asatir, 2005). Variation 1: *A Chronicle of the Early Safawis: Being the Ahsanu’t-Tawarikh of Hasan-i Rumlu*. Gaekwad’s Oriental Series no. 57, 69 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931). Variation 2: *Ahsenu’t-Tevarih*. Turk Tarih Kurumu yayınları. II. Dizi sayı 29. (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2006); Qazi Ahmad ibn Muhammad Qazvini Ghaffari, *Tarikh-i Jahan-ara/Nusakh-i Jahan-ara*, ed. H. Naraqi (Tehran: Kitabfurusht-i Hafiz, 1964). A. H. Nava’i has established that one of ‘Abdi Beg’s main sources for his chronicle was Qazi Ahmad Ghaffari’s *Tarikh-i Jahan-ara*, his close associate at court. For the possibility of the third common source, see his discussion in Shirazi, *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, 23–31.
14. For further discussion on ‘Abdi Beg’s activities see, for example, Rasul Ja’fariyan, “Didgah-ha-yi Siyasi-i ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi dar bara-yi Shah Tahmasb Safavi,” in *Safaviyah dar ‘Arsa-yi Din, Farhang va Siyasat*, vol. 1 (Qum, 2000), 493–503.
15. Vincentio D’Alessandri, *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Charles Grey (London, 1873), 223.
16. Ahmad Kasravi, *Shaykh Safi va Tabarash* (Tehran, 1355), pioneered the research into the Safavid house’s genealogy. This was followed by Zeki Velidi Togan, “Sur l’origine des Safavides,” *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, vol. 3 (Damascus, 1957), 345–57. For a recent evaluation regarding the scholarship, as well as the issue of authenticity of the Safavid claim to be sayyids, see Kazuo Morimoto, “The Earliest ‘Alid Genealogy for the Safavids: New Evidence for the Pre-dynastic Claim to Sayyid Status,” *Iranian Studies* 43, no. 4 (2010): 447–69.
17. For example, the subtext in the reports that Nishati Shirazi records in *Tazkirah-yi Shaykh Safi al-Din* regarding Shaykh Safi al-Din’s sayyadid lineage bespeaks much insecurity as he attempts to provide copious indisputable evidence in support of a Safavid sacred ancestry. Muhammad al-Katib (Nishati Shirazi), *Tazkirah-yi Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili*, ed. Davud Bihluli (Qum, 1388), 35–37.
18. Morimoto has demonstrated that the sayyadid ancestry of the Safavids was in circulation as early as the 1460s. Morimoto, “The Earliest ‘Alid Genealogy for the Safavids,” 447–69.
19. Ertugrul Duzdag, *Kanuni Devri Seyhulislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları* (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2012), 135–40. For the unabridged version of this fatwa, see Abdurrahman Atçıl’s essay in chapter 2 of this volume from which this translation is quoted.
20. See, for example, Muhammad al-Katib, *Tazkirah-yi Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili*, ed. Davud Bihluli (Qum, 1388); for a discussion on Mir Abul Fath’s revision of Ibn Bazzaz’s (d. 1371) hagiographical work *Safvat al-Safa*, see Ibn Bazzaz Ardabili, *Safvat al-Safa: Dar Tarjumah-yi Ahval va Aqval va Karamat-i Shaykh Safi al-Din Ishaq Ardabili*, ed.

- Ghulam Riza Tabataba'i Majd (1373 /1994; Tabriz, rpt. Tehran: Intisharat-i Zaryab, 1376 /1997), 20–26. Variation: *Safvat al-Safa*, ed. and trans. Heidi Zirke, *Ein Hagiographisches Zeugnis Zur Persischen Geschichte Aus Der Mitte Des 14. Jahrhunderts: Das Achte Kapitel Des Safwat As-safa in Kritischer Bearbeitung* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1987); see also a later Safavid work on the Safavid ancestry, Husain ibn Abdal Zahidi, *Silsilat al-nasab-i Safaviyyah* (1343; Berlin: Chapkhanah-yi Iranshahr, 1924). On the issue of fifteen-century dynasties manipulating their genealogies in order to reinforce their claims to sovereignty, see John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 8–10.
21. On the issue of infallibility of Shi'i imams in leadership, see Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Hayat al-Qulub*, vol. 5 (Tehran, 1384), 49–64; and 'Allamah al-Hilli, *Nahj al-Mustarshadin fi Usul al-Din*, ed. S. A. al-Husayni and S. H. al-Yusufi, in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, ed. S. A. Arjomand (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 240–49.
 22. Said Amir Arjomand, "Two Decrees of Shah Tahmasp Concerning Statecraft and the Authority of Shaykh 'Ali al-Karaki," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 250–53. The traditional principle of kingship as articulated in pre-Islamic Persianate political advice literature (*pand-namag*) and Islamic era "mirror for princes" genre (*siyar al-muluk*) posits that kingly legitimacy rests on the ruler's ability to propagate justice and defend the Divine Law. Influential ethicists such as Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274), Jalal al-Din Davani (d. 1502) propagated this conception of kingship in their works and helped establish it as a dominant political view.
 23. On prophets as kings in the Islamic tradition of kingship, see Said Amir Arjomand, "Perso-Islamic Political Ethic in Relation to the Sources of Islamic Law," in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, ed. Mehrdad Boroujerdi (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 82–106.
 24. Mulla Muhammad Baqir Sabzavari, *Rawzat al-Anwar 'Abbasi*, ed. Ismail Ardahayi (Tehran, 2004), 66–67. This view regarding Imam Mahdi's hidden benefits to the community during his occultation was commonly held by many Safavid 'ulama'. See, for instance, the works of Muhammad 'Abd al-Hasib 'Alavi 'Amuli (d. 1709) and Muhammad Yusuf Naji (d. c. 1720s).
 25. See Asma Afsaruddin's valuable study, "Maslahah as a Political Concept," in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, ed. Mehrdad Boroujerdi (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 16–44.
 26. The doctrine that informs 'Abdi Beg's interpretation had developed long before the Safavid rise to power in the sixteenth century, particularly in the later classical period by such figures as Muhammad al-Tusi (d. 1067) and 'Allamah al-Hilli (d. 1325). Their work influenced later Safavid religious thinkers such as 'Ali al-Karaki (d. 1534), Mulla Muhsin Fayz Kashani (d. 1679), and Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (d. 1699).
 27. Shirazi, *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, 33–37.

28. *Dawla* is a term widely used in medieval and early modern Perso-Arabic Islamic political writings in reference to the notion of “turn of fortune” with connotations of state power and dynastic cycle. It was also used in honorific court titles, as in *Wali al-Dawla*, or military titles, as *Sayf al-Dawla* (sword of the dynasty/state), and so on.
29. A famous hadith cited and expounded upon by many Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240).
30. In the early phase of the Safavid’s rise, part of their religio-political message was heavily marked by a powerful expression of historic injustice that they aimed to rectify—a typical aspiration in the furor of a revolution. Imam ‘Ali’s position, they claimed, as the rightful leader of the early Muslim community after the death of the Prophet had been usurped by the first three Caliphs, Abu Bakr (d. 634), Umar (d. 644), and Uthman (d. 656). Thus ‘Abdi Beg, as an example of a Safavid spokesperson, espoused the view that as a result, Muhammad’s community had unjustly been driven to ruin by tyrannical rulers for centuries. This view has led to the creation of a particular Shi’i historical narrative tinged by pathos, exacerbated by memories and myths of persecution and martyrdom of their holy imams and religious scholars, a great example of which is that of Imam Husain’s death. He is the third Shi’i imam, the son of ‘Ali and the Prophet’s grandson, who led an uprising against the Umayyids and was killed at the plains of Karbala in 680. Husain’s martyrdom and the tragic life stories of other imams organically became a part of the Safavid political and religious mood of the era, helping to sustain the Safavid’s ideological claim to sovereignty. This mood can be felt in the devotional poems of such court-connected Safavid poets as ‘Abdi Beg himself, Gharibi Tabrizi, Muhtasham Kashani, and Sa’ib Tabrizi, to name a few. For more information on Safavid era poets, see, Paul Losensky’s essay in chapter 9 in this volume.
31. Taliqan in contemporary Iran is a province 144 kilometers northwest of the capital city of Tehran.
32. A clan of Quraysh, a prominent tribe in Mecca who traced their descendant to the noble house of Hashim ibn ‘Abd Manaf, a common ancestor of Muhammad, ‘Ali, and ‘Abbas.
33. For Safavid followers like ‘Abdi Beg, the “red band” was interpreted as a direct reference to the red turbans (*taj-i Haydari*) that the Safavid followers wore, winning them the nickname in Turkish as *Qizilbash* (red heads).
34. Shirazi, *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, 34. ‘Abdi Beg attributes this saying to the Prophet and might have used Baha’ al-Din al-Nili’s compilation with slight variations (‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al-Karim Baha’ al-Din al-Nili, *Muntakhab al-Anwar al-Mudi’ah: fi dhikr al-Qa’im al-Hujjah* (Qum, 1999), 343). There are numerous similar accounts of the coming of Mahdi in medieval Shi’i eschatological literature, see, for instance, Muhammad al-Mufid’s *Al-Fusul al-Ashara fi al-Ghayba* (Najaf: al-Matbu‘at al-Haydariyya, 1951); and Muhammad al-Nu‘mani, *Al-Ghaybah*, ed. Faris H. Karim (Beirut, 2011).
35. Referring to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib (c. 567–c. 653 CE), the paternal uncle of the Prophet Muhammad and the eponymous ancestor of the ‘Abbasid dynasty.
36. Daylamites inhabited the rugged mountainous region near the southern Caspian Sea and were famed for their bravery.
37. *Sindh* refers to the region mostly in today’s Pakistan.
38. In general terms, *Hind* refers to the Indian subcontinent.

39. Berber was a common designation for tribes inhabiting various regions in North Africa.
40. Tabaristan refers to a region in northern Iran in today's province of Mazandaran.
41. 'Abdi Beg seems to have used al-Nu'mani, *al-Ghaybah*, 257–58, for this hadith. By repeating this hadith, 'Abdi Beg is alluding to Shah Ismail as the designated leader who prepares the way for the coming of Imam Mahdi (the Messiah). Some early Safavid supporters believed that Ismail was the precursor to Mahdi.
42. For the Safavid house and their supporters, such as 'Abdi Beg, their rise to power was also an eschatological one that the anticipated Shi'i rule, long denied the Prophet's household, had at last been attained. Although the Ismaili Fatimid dynasty of North Africa (909–1171) had preceded them in achieving this goal by several centuries, the Safavids downplayed their role and highlighted their own historic exceptionality.
43. And say: "Truth has (now) arrived and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish" (Q. 17:81). All Qur'anic translations are by Yusuf 'Ali.
44. "Their intention is to extinguish Allah's Light (by blowing) with their mouths: But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it)" (Q. 61:8).

FURTHER READING

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II. Kingship and Legitimacy in the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire

HÜSEYİN YILMAZ

A LOOK AT IDRIS-I BIDLISI'S CAREER

Idris b. Husameddin Ali (d. 1520) was born in Bitlis into a family of scholars. His father, Husameddin, was a renowned scholar and a bureaucrat in the service of the Aqqyunlu dynasty. He received a well-rounded education thanks to his father's distinguished circle of friends, which included statesmen, scholars, poets, and Sufis. Among them was Abdurrahman Jami who seems to have had the greatest impact on Bidlisi's thought. He joined the Aqqyunlu bureaucracy at a young age and soon became known to the Ottomans through diplomatic letters he composed for his patrons. Upon the Safavid takeover of Tabriz in 1501, he declined Shah Ismail's (r. 1501–1524) offer to join his administration and instead took refuge with the Ottomans, where he was given a privileged position at Bayezid II's (r. 1481–1512) court.

Later Ottoman tradition immortalized him for spectacular achievements as a statesman and a scholar. Following Selim I's (r. 1512–1520) victorious military campaigns against the Safavids and the Mamluks, Bidlisi was commissioned with the difficult task of bringing independence-loving tribes, mostly Kurdish, under the Ottoman authority. He succeeded in doing so thanks to his scholarly credentials, diplomatic skills, and inherent knowledge of the area. He composed his *Hasht Bihisht* (*Eight Gardens*), a landmark in Ottoman historiography, upon Bayezid II's request. Written in exquisitely ornate literary Persian, the work is reminiscent of Firdawsi's (d. 1020) epic, *Shahnama* (*The Book of Kings*), which became increasingly popular in the post-Abbasid Mongol and Timurid courts. Being new to the

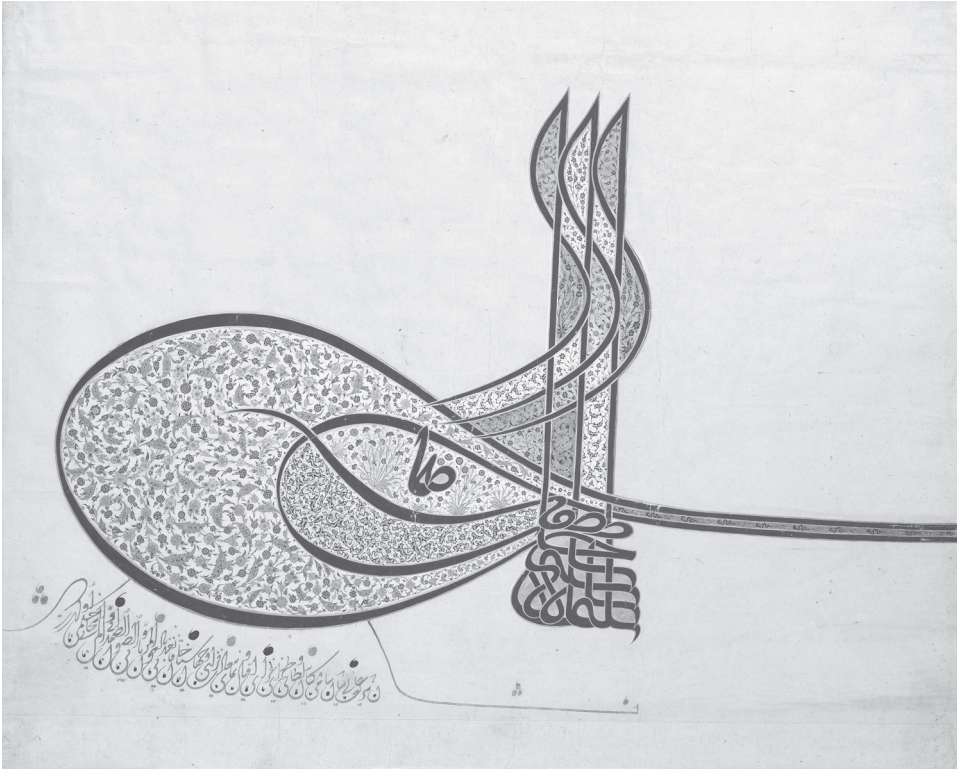


FIGURE 4.2 Tughra of Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent

A mid-sixteenth century Ottoman *tughra* (insignia) belonging to Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent. The imperial tughras were included on all official documents, royal decrees, coins, and diplomatic correspondences. The tughra's intricate design was not only meant to inspire awe, but also made difficult to forge.

Date: c. 1555–60

Place of origin: Istanbul, Turkey

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1938. 38.149.1.

world of the Ottomans, Bidlisi concerned himself less with a detailed and accurate chronicle of events than with using history to create a new imperial ideology based on the Sufistic conception of the caliphate. Unlike his near contemporary Aşıkpaşazade's (d. 1484) *Tevarih-i 'Al-i 'Osman*, which emphasized the frontier characteristics of Ottoman polity and the saintly culture of antinomian Turcoman mystics, Bidlisi recast the Ottoman dynasty in the vocabulary of a mystical philosophy of high Islamic culture.

Bidlisi composed *Qanun-i Shahanshahi* (*The Essence of Kingship*) toward the end of Bayezid II's reign (r. 1481–1512). *The Essence of Kingship* is a theoretical exposition of what he narrated in his *Eight Gardens*. In the latter work, Bidlisi was not shy in depicting Ottoman rulers as the true caliphs of their respective ages. His theory of the caliphate accords an uncontested legitimacy to Ottoman sovereignty in a competitive Eurasian spiritual space full of formidable opponents, including

rebellious shaykhs at home and messianic dynasties abroad such as the Safavids who claimed legitimacy based on their sacred Shi'i ancestry, as discussed by Hani Khafipour in the previous essay.

It would be instructive to view Bidlisi's conception of caliphate alongside the perspective of another Ottoman statesman, Lutfi Paşa (d. 1563), who served as a grand vizier during the reign of Suleiman (r. 1520–1566) from 1539 to 1541. In retirement, Lutfi Paşa devoted himself to scholarship and composed works in statecraft, history, jurisprudence, and theology.

In an important but somewhat less popular work, *Khalas al-Umma fi Ma'rifa al-'Aimma (Deliverance of the Community in Recognizing the Leaders)*, Lutfi Paşa defended the Ottoman ruler's right to claim the titles imam and caliph in order to refute the juristic dictum that the supreme rulership of a Muslim community is the exclusive reserve of the tribe of Quraish to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged. By drawing evidence from a wide spectrum of sources ranging from Sufism to jurisprudence, Lutfi Paşa reduced legitimacy to acquisition of executive power. He ruled out all other conditions stipulated in juristic theory for the legitimacy of the imamate/caliphate, including justice and being a Muslim, considering them characteristics of good governance rather than requirements for the supreme rulership of the universal Muslim community.

The supreme leader (*imam-i a'zam*) is a sovereign sultan who rules over most cities of Muslims such as those of the Rum, Arab, Hijaz, Yemen till the end of seas, the Arab Iraq, Baghdad, Diyarbekir, Morocco, and cities of Hungary all the way to the far end of Germans. At the time of conflicting events, his shadow covers conditions of time like Sultan Suleiman b. Selim Han b. Bayezid Han, who is the leader of time (*imam-i zaman*) in upholding religion and protecting the realm of Islam with the noble Shari'a.

If asked, who is Sultan Suleiman? Is he the leader of time or not? Then we answer as follows: No doubt, he is the leader of time. He is the defender of the religious law. So are his deputies and governors. The scholars of time help him. So do the sultans of the Arab, the Turk, the Kurd and the Persian. As mentioned, he has many cities under his control. The definition of leader suits him. He is the deputy (*ka'im makam*) of the Prophet in upholding the religion. Thus it is incumbent upon the whole community to obey him.¹

In contrast, Bidlisi's *The Essence of Kingship* reflected the triumph of Sufism in post-Mongolian political thought from Nile to Oxus, and he built his entire political philosophy on the Sufistic conception of the caliphate. Despite his juristic credentials at the highest level, *The Essence of Kingship* does not display a trace of the juristic theory of kingship. His political thought reflects a wide range of ideas drawn from different intellectual traditions assimilated into Sufism. Above all, Bidlisi is a Suhrawardian. Similar to the illuminationist Sufi-philosopher al-Suhrawardi, who was executed in 1191 by Salah al-Din because of his political views, Bidlisi's concept of the caliphate rests on the knowledge of God and being endowed with His traits as His true vicegerent on earth. He draws a clear distinction between the true

caliphate and that of appearance; the former is defined to be a cosmic rank only to be attained in the spiritual realm, whereas the latter is a temporal kingship defined as executive power. This conception puts the sultan and the pauper on equal footing for acquisition of the caliphate. Whether hidden or known, the world is never deprived of a caliph as the true ruler of the age. This view comes to light in the excerpt translated below.²

Translation

EXCERPTS FROM BITLISI'S *THE ESSENCE OF KINGSHIP*

The first proposition of the introduction is on verifying the truth of the vicegerency of God's lordship (*khilafat-i rabbani*); the second proposition is on establishing the world's need for rulership and governance of the world: "Here is Our record that tells the truth about you" (Q. 45:29). Know that, when God granted man the honor of "verily we have honored the children of Adam" (Q. 17:70), He made man precedent and recipient of His bounty over all other elements of the universe, ennobled and honored him by exalting him among the creation, and elevated him to the leadership of the created. First, He made him the manifestation of His attributes of perfection in entirety, and an assembly of His qualities of beauty and majesty. In accordance with "I molded Adam's clay with My own hand," He cast Adam's constitution in two natures by mixing two corresponding but opposite essences. He lightened the candle of Adam's heart from the torch of His sacred light: "So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of My Spirit" (Q. 15:29). One substance of man is from the realm of spirits and incorporeal beings whereas the other is from the realm of nature and corporeal beings. The substance of his spiritual essence comes from the realm of heavens and the source of happiness. The substance of his corporal body is made from the material realm. With his sublime substance, he belongs to the angels of heavens, and with his base substance he belongs to the level of animals and other material compounds. Combining these two substances makes him exceptional and exalted among the existent entities (*a'yan-i mawjudat*). Thanks to his state of equilibrium and unification of virtues, he is placed at the rank of vicegerency and nobility. "I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth" (Q. 2:30) alludes to this rank and the quality of being the shadow of God (*zilliyyat-i subhani*).

This quality of uniting existent entities in man necessitates him to be the manifestation of noble subtleties and the cause of deserving God's call, "We have set thee as a viceroy in the earth" (Q. 38:26). So much so that someone who comes after and succeeds the former is called a caliph. The caliph, therefore, is expected to display the noble traits of the succeeded. No doubt, only the fortunate and the favored deserve being adorned with the rank of the vicegerency of the Merciful and the leadership of both the spiritual and temporal realms. In accordance with "and He taught Adam all the names" (Q. 2:31), he is innately capable of understanding,

realizing, and being qualified with the knowledge of the truth of existence from its beginning to its end. In acquiring divine morals and qualities, which are sublime measures and a felicitous ornament, he is envisioned to be “God created Adam in His own image.”

It has been verified then that the vicegerency of God’s mercy is the fortunate servant’s qualification with traits and perfections of lordship to the extent it is humanly possible, equipping one’s self with praiseworthy human habits in relation to the universal material order, and uniting the visible realm with that of the spiritual. If this receiver of perfections sits on the throne of rulership and glory in this world, then he is called a sultan of both temporal and spiritual realms. These are such sultans as prophets, God’s friends, the four rightly guided caliphs, and the twelve protected imams. Those who are not commissioned with the execution of commands and prohibitions to rule the temporal realm, but unify in themselves perfection of knowledge and action [and] have the qualities of leadership and guidance of humankind, are called the sultans of the realm of meanings (*kishvar-i ma’ani*). They unify gnostic and practical perfections and are known as the flag-bearers of God’s army. As such, certain prophets and God’s friends are honored with “poverty is my honor and I take pride in it.” For eyes that can only see the ostensibly visible, they look indeed poor and pauper. But, in fact, incisive eyes see their reality, that is, as rulers without soldiers and ministers. God says: “My friends are under my domes, no one else knows them but Me.” If the ruler of the temporal realm is not endowed with those spiritual qualities and Godly morality, then he is not worthy of being God’s shadow. In this case, the title “sultan” is nothing more than a metaphor, similar to naming one piece in chess Queen. In reality, a statue without a soul in the shape of a ruler is more visible than drawings on a painting plate: “Dead! Rather, they are alive, but you perceive it not” (Q. 2:154).

The second proposition of the introduction is affirming the method and the manner by which the temporal world’s need for the caliphate of God’s mercy is shown. Know that manifesting the signs of God’s lordship (*rububiyya*) requires the association of his attributes of knowledge and power. Similarly, the rules of kingship entail that these two attributes of perfection are seen in association in the temporal world. No doubt, the caliphate of God’s mercy, which is the representation of God’s power, should perfectly display these two attributes so that the requirement of caliphate is manifested in God’s caliphate. These two attributes for constituting the axis of all existence display God’s signs of beauty and majesty among mankind. The Prophet, peace be upon him, as the king of mankind and the lord of universal order, was sent to reform souls and give order to the material world. He was sent to explain the primordial beginning and the eschatological end [*mabda’ va ma’ad*], and to establish the laws of sustenance among all servants of God and all nations of the world: “We have sent you only to bring good news and warning to all people” (Q. 34:28). It is certain that the purpose of sending messengers and prophets, and of proscribing the obligation to obey rightly guided leaders [*a’imma*] and caliphs is a

manifestation of divine secrets and guiding to the right path in commands and prohibitions, as pointed in the verse: “Our word has already been given to Our servants, the messengers: it is they who will be helped” (Q. 37:171–72).

At the time of the Prophet’s leadership, all spiritual and material virtues reached perfection: “Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen as your religion Islam” (Q. 5:3). For this reason, until the final hour and the hour of resurrection, nothing from among all the affairs of the world will require sending of a new Divine Law (*shari’a*), nor will there be an occasion to designate laws stronger than the *shari’a* and the customs and wisdom of the religion of Islam. As the verse “it was only as a mercy that We sent you [the Prophet] to all people” (Q. 21:107) shows, to guide all the nations of mankind in matters of conduct, caliphs and rulers among servants are given two divine laws and righteous guides to show commands and prohibitions at all times: “I have left two things with you. As long as you hold fast to them, you will not go astray. They are the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Prophet.” No doubt every seeker of happiness who holds fast to these two sound ropes of pure ordinances and unbreakable handles is always protected from deviating from the right path, and his acts and conditions would always conform to God’s will. Now, if he looks into these two world-showing cups that serve as two seeing eyes for his own condition as well as the affairs of the world, then all of his worldly demands and temporal and spiritual goals become closer to goodness and salvation.

Now, know that the purpose of the Book (that is, the *Qur’an*) and the Sunna are of two kinds: one for knowledge and one for practice. The reason behind the revelation of the Book and sending prophets is to reform the present and the future, and to facilitate the needs and aims of God’s servants. This condition of perfection in people’s souls is either knowing the primordial origin and the eschatological return, or knowing how to make people’s lives better in the world of generation and corruption [*‘alam-i kawn va fasad*]. The purpose of knowledge and philosophy is the cognizance of the first; and the purpose of laws and rules is to know and practice the second in order to attain the spiritual happiness and liberation from corruption and worldly tribulations. Yet each of these two understandings and practices are of two kinds: either the knowledge of the servant [*‘ilm-i khadim*] or the knowledge of the Served [*‘ilm-i makhdum*]. Likewise, for the practice, it is either the practice of the servant [*‘amal-i khadim*] or the practice of the Served [*‘amal-i makhdum*]. The knowledge of the servant is a prerequisite for attaining the knowledge of the Served. Because the knowledge of laws concerns practices and conditions, its order is the reason for the continuity of God’s servants and a precondition for the knowledge of God. Therefore, this kind of knowledge is a requirement for everyone, for the prerequisite for a requirement, which is the knowledge of God, is also itself a requirement. As for the knowledge of the Served, it is the knowledge of unity and cognizance of God with His attribute of perfect unity and praises of beauty and majesty. The knowledge of the Served includes all the knowledge of scholars, intuitive knowledge, and the wisdom of prophets and philosophers.

No knowledge can remain outside this part because knowing the reality of created things and knowing the nature of existence as it stands is impossible without knowing the creator. For this reason, without knowing the necessary being [God], it is impossible to know the realm of possibilities. Acquiring philosophical knowledge and spiritual perfection by knowing impossibilities and nonexistents is not reliable. The possessor of such knowledge of impossibilities is not considered a philosopher or a scholar. As for the practice of the servant, it concerns either people's means of livelihood or excelling in morality and acquiring commendable habits. The first example is someone who knows how to conduct daily transactions and acquire nourishment and goods. The second example is someone who knows the method of excelling in morality and deeds. This action is necessary and obligatory for those who concern themselves with the affairs of livelihood or who seek eternal happiness. That is to say, the continuity of mankind in the world of elements requires one to acquire the means of life and indispensable necessities of living. The one who seeks happiness in two worlds and interacts with others in commendable ways needs to acquire the etiquette of interaction and learn the habits of companionship.

As for the practice of the Served, it concerns the well-being of all mankind and the reason of the order of laws pertaining to all the inhabitants of the world, such as devoting diligent attention to the management of worldly and religious affairs for the servants of God, helping anyone to reach the right path, guiding them on matters of primordial beginning and eschatological ends, enlightening them on house management and civic life. However, this should be done with justice and righteousness. Now, maintaining this practice and administering God's creation requires a purified spirit and a possessor of esoteric power who is assisted by a God's succor such as Prophets, saints, and friends of God who are rulers of the realm of existence. Among the people of appearance, kings and sovereigns rule the world with justice, stay conscious of God's glory and greatness, and care for God's people at all times. Those who are blessed with felicity and uphold worldly affairs are called God's shadow [*zill Allah*] and God's caliph [*khalifat Allah*]. At times, the spiritual caliphate (*khilafat-i ma'navi*) and true leadership (*imamat-i haqiqi*) unite in the personality of one friend of God. Because of lacking rulership in appearance (*dawlat-i suri*), perhaps most people deny him and continue their oppression. Yet it is reported from prophets and friends of God who looked like poor dervishes that while being poor and powerless they were commissioned with the task of the caliphate of God's mercy.

At times, the temporal caliphate and external sultanate conform to the laws of prophets (*shariat-i nabavi*) and customs of spiritual caliphs (*khulafa-yi ma'navi*). Such a person could be called a true caliph and commander of the faithful. His commands and prohibitions should be obeyed carefully because God's command "You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you" (Q. 4:59) orders obeying God, his messenger, and the holder of authority. Temporal rulers who strive to implement Prophetic laws, maintain justice, protect religion,

and engage in raids and wage war deserve to be praised. These are the most virtuous after the prophets and saints, and the most beloved in God's presence. Because the prophet stated "Indeed, the most beloved of people to Allah on the Day of Judgment, and the nearest to Him in rank is the just ruler [*imam*]." As necessitated by divine will, at all times, from among the rulers of the world and caliphs of mankind, one from each of these two parts enjoys the rank of a caliph, either in appearance or in reality, in order to perfect souls and reform both the ruler and the ruled. The world is never bereft of these two types, as told by the Prophet: "A group from my community never stops fighting righteously helping those who serve them until the last of them fights Antichrist."

As shown with these premises, just rulers are manifestations of God's power, for reforming people of the time with the majesty of kingship. Prophets, rightly guided leaders [*a'imma*], and scholars are manifestations of divine knowledge, for promulgating laws of prohibitions and obligations, and endless wisdom.

A LOOK AT HASAN KAFI EL-AKHISARI'S CAREER

Hasan Kafi (d. 1615), a prolific Ottoman scholar and judge, was born in Prusac, Bosnia-Herzegovina, also known as Akhisar (white castle), from which his toponym Akhisari derives. He received his medrese education from prominent scholars in Istanbul and spent most of his life as a provincial judge in the Balkans. He authored well-regarded works on grammar, logic, jurisprudence, theology, biography, and government. By far his best-known work is *Usulu'l-Hikem fi Nizami'l-Alem* (*Elements of Wisdom for the Order of the World*). He first composed the work in Arabic and presented it to high-ranking Ottoman statesmen during Mehmed III's Eger campaign of 1596. Upon request, he soon translated it into Turkish, and it instantly gained popularity among Ottoman readership and earned him the sultan's favor. In addition to its various editions in Turkish and Arabic, the work has been translated into several European languages since the early nineteenth century. Bosnian scholars have displayed a special interest in studying Hasan Kafi and his works as he has been considered a home-grown cultural icon. He is still considered a saint by many in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and his tomb is a place of veneration.

Elements of Wisdom is a reform treatise that criticizes malpractices in administration and calls for the restoration of the ancient law (*kanun-i kadim*). Invented first by the sixteenth-century grand vizier Lutfi Pasha (d. 1563), the author of *Deliverance of the Community* discussed previously, this new genre of political writing became increasingly popular among Ottoman statesmen because it purported to have materialized the ideal polity in Ottoman practice that rests on law and institutions rather than the ruler's moral qualifications. In *Usulu'l-Hikem*, Hasan Kafi mentions two medieval works as his sources, Baidawi's (d. 1286) Qur'anic commentary *Anwar al-Tanzil*, and Zamakhshari's (d. 1144) book of

parables *Rabi al-Abrar*. He uses these works only to quote moral stories to illustrate his arguments and make his work more binding on the authority of these two influential scholars. He wrote the treatise to “renew the principles of world order,” which he observed to have been corrupted since the year 1572. Hasan Kafi summed up the causes of this corruption as failure to maintain justice, meritocracy, consultation, and military technology accompanied with the spread of bribery and breaching spheres of authority.

Hasan Kafi’s proposal aimed to restore the constitution of Ottoman polity, which rests on the proper administration of four principal orders that composes the body politic. The idea of an ideal society composed of four or more groups is very common in works of statecraft, especially those written in the Persianate tradition. With Hasan Kafi, the idea turned into a constitutional principle, an indispensable ingredient of order and good governance from which all laws of government emanate. In this scheme, every group had its own rights and obligations for the body politic to function in an orderly fashion. These rights and obligations were to be maintained through established customs and laws decreed by the ruler. The very reason for the existence of rulership and the primary objective of the ruler was to keep this order in balance by keeping each group within its own sphere of activity and preventing breaches.

Hasan Kafi makes it starkly clear in the excerpt below that if this balance of order is broken the collapse of kingship becomes imminent.³ He therefore shifts the focus of political thinking from kingship to society and accords the ruler and his administration only an instrumental value.

Translation

EXCERPTS FROM HASAN KAFI’S *ELEMENTS OF WISDOM FOR THE ORDER OF THE WORLD*

The introduction of the book concerns the reasons behind the order of the world. The reason of the order of the world is that, indeed, God predicated the continuity of the world on the continuity of humankind. Namely, He willed that as long as humankind continues to exist, so will the world until the time comes to an end, which is the doomsday. Similarly, he made mankind’s continuity contingent upon procreation. Procreation occurs through interaction and pairing, which depends on wealth. Wealth, in return, is only gained through transactions among people. This necessity requires the existence of laws through which the interests of people are protected at all times. In response to this necessity, previous scholars and intelligent men, with inspiration from God, organized humanity into four groups. They assigned one group to the sword, one to the pen, one to farming, and one to crafts and commerce. Then they called controlling and administering these four groups kingship.

The first group, assigned to the sword, consists of kings, ministers, deputies such as governors and similar officers, and other assistants and soldiers who serve the sword. But what is their assigned task? They are responsible for governing all four groups with justice and good governance, not on the basis of their own convictions but in conformity with the measures and opinions of scholars and the intelligent, lest they err. It is incumbent upon this group to engage in warfare in order to defend all from enemy incursions and to render other similar services expected of kings and governors, as will be explained.

The second group, assigned to the pen, consists of scholars, the intelligent, the pious, the weak, and people who make prayers, namely, those who are incapable of fighting but could only engage in prayers and invocations. If you ask: “what should their task be?” Then we answer as follows: Their responsibility is to oversee God’s commands and prohibitions. Namely, they undertake the task of “commanding good and forbidding wrong” by writing books, reporting by tongue, and telling the ordinances of religion to all other groups. Further, they are responsible for counseling, teaching religious sciences and practices, persuading people to observe religion, and convince them to live in peace. In good faith, they should make prayers for the well-being of people and the ruler, for in comparison to society, a ruler is like a heart in a body. So long as the heart remains healthy so does the whole body.

The third group, which is assigned to farming, cultivates grains, vineyards, and fruits. They are better known in our time as common people. Their task is to provide what is needed for survival such as growing grains and fruits, and work to raise animals that are necessary for living so that they are sufficient for the consumption of all other groups. After knowledge and raiding for faith (*‘ilm ve gaza*), their service is the most valuable.

The fourth is assigned to crafts and commerce. These are craftsmen who know various arts and skills. Their obligation is to work on what is necessary for crafts and goods of exchange as well as what benefits the public from among the suitable works of craftsmen and merchants.

If you inquire about the question of an able and intelligent person who remains outside these four groups, the answer is that, according to the philosophers of the Muslim community, these kinds of people should not be left on their own. On the contrary, they should be pulled and placed in one of the four groups by force so that no group suffers. Some philosophers ruled that such riffraff who continue to live with no benefit to others should be killed because their existence is a burden to and harmful for all others. At the time of previous sultans—may God forgive them—such idle people would be inspected every year and prevented from staying as such. For example, because it was difficult to prevent the blacks (*arab taifesi*) [from social mobility] there were strict prohibitions enforced at ports to prevent them from crossing to the Rumelia province. This is why in the old days productivity and God’s bounty were ample in the realm of Rum. I wish these

inspections would continue in our time as well so that people are not allowed to be idle.

To maintain order in government and the realm, it is imperative that each group engages in their respective occupation. If each group displays negligence and laziness in upholding their assigned occupations, it leads to corruption of order and deterioration of conditions in the realm. As learned from this rule and measure, it is not appropriate to remove someone from his assigned occupation and force upon him the occupation of another group. No doubt, this kind of enforcement and assignment leads to change and corruption. In fact, negative change and corruption of the past few years have occurred for this reason. Because villagers, craftsmen, and urban dwellers are sent off to the frontiers and forced to wage war, the cavalry and foot soldiers neglected combat, officers slackened, and means of living deteriorated. In provinces, shortage reached to such a degree that goods that could once be bought for one silver coin could not be found now for ten silver coins. Sending producers and townsfolk to the frontiers by force is not an ancient custom but has taken place since the year 1000 [1592 CE]. Especially in the Herzegovinan and Bosnian frontier, during military campaigns, commanders have been sending recruiters to the province to force cultivators from villages as well as Muslims and craftsmen from towns to join military campaigns. As a result, the poor cultivators failed to produce, community prayers are abandoned in towns, and shortages and troubles spread across the province. Consequently, the soldiers too were struck by afflictions and started to desert.

As long as the ruler's administration conforms to the ancient order, namely, he rules in accordance with the religious law, ensures that people are placed in their proper groups and occupations, then his government and realm thrive in order, the condition of people improves, and kingship becomes stronger. If these ancient customs and commendable paths are neglected, then corruption spreads to the realm and kingship. Then weakness afflicts the kingship from all four directions to the extent that it may require the transfer of authority to someone else.

O Allah: Protect the realm of Islam from corruption. O Lord: Remove the existing corruption and protect us in the future. O Lord: Protect the Ottoman reign from afflictions leading to the transfer of authority.

NOTES

1. Lutfi Paşa. *Halas al-Umma fi Ma'rifa al-A'imma*. MS, SK, Ayasofya 2877, 22b.
2. Hakim Idris ibn Husam al-Din Bidlisi, *Qanun-i Shahensahi*, ed. 'Abd Allah Mas'udi Arani (Tehran: Markaz-i Pazhuhishi-i Miras-i Maktub, 2008 or 2009), 7–15.
3. Mehmet İpşirli, "Hasan Kafi el-Akhisari ve Devlet Düzenine Ait Eseri *Usulü'l-Hikem fi Nizami'l-Alem*," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 10–11 (1979–80): 251–53.

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III. The Millennial and Saintly Sovereignty of Emperor Shah Jahan According to a Court Sufi

A. AZFAR MOIN

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti (d. 1683) was a learned Sufi of the Sabiri Chishti lineage who served as a religious scholar and spiritual adviser in the courts of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (d. 1666). Among his many works is the *Mir’at al-Asrar* (*Mirror of Secrets*) excerpted and translated below.¹ Written between 1635 and 1655, this book is a grand compilation of the lives of holy men and saints, especially but not exclusively of the Sufis of the Chishti order. In it, ‘Abd al-Rahman provides a broad survey of the biography and writings of Sufis and ascetics spanning more than a thousand years, from the earliest generations of Islam to his own time. But the *Mir’at al-Asrar* is more than just a book about Muslim saints. It is also a court text and contains extensive details about Mughal imperial genealogy, history, and sacred kingship.

‘Abd al-Rahman also spent a considerable part of his life as a Mughal courtier, so he begins and ends this work with a praise for Emperor Shah Jahan, his genealogy, and Mughal religious policy, which included a large-scale patronage of Sufis, especially of Chishti Sufis and their saint shrines, especially that of Shaykh Mu‘in al-Din (d. 1236) in Ajmer. Ever since Shah Jahan’s grandfather, the Mughal Emperor Jalal al-Din Akbar (d. 1605), had adopted the saint buried in Ajmer as the spiritual patron of his dynasty, Mu‘in al-Din Chishti’s tomb had become the most important Sufi and imperial shrine of South Asia. Even Shah Jahan had dedicated a new mosque to the Ajmer shrine in his reign. In sum, the fate of the Chishti Sufi order and the Mughal imperial dynasty had become intertwined in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

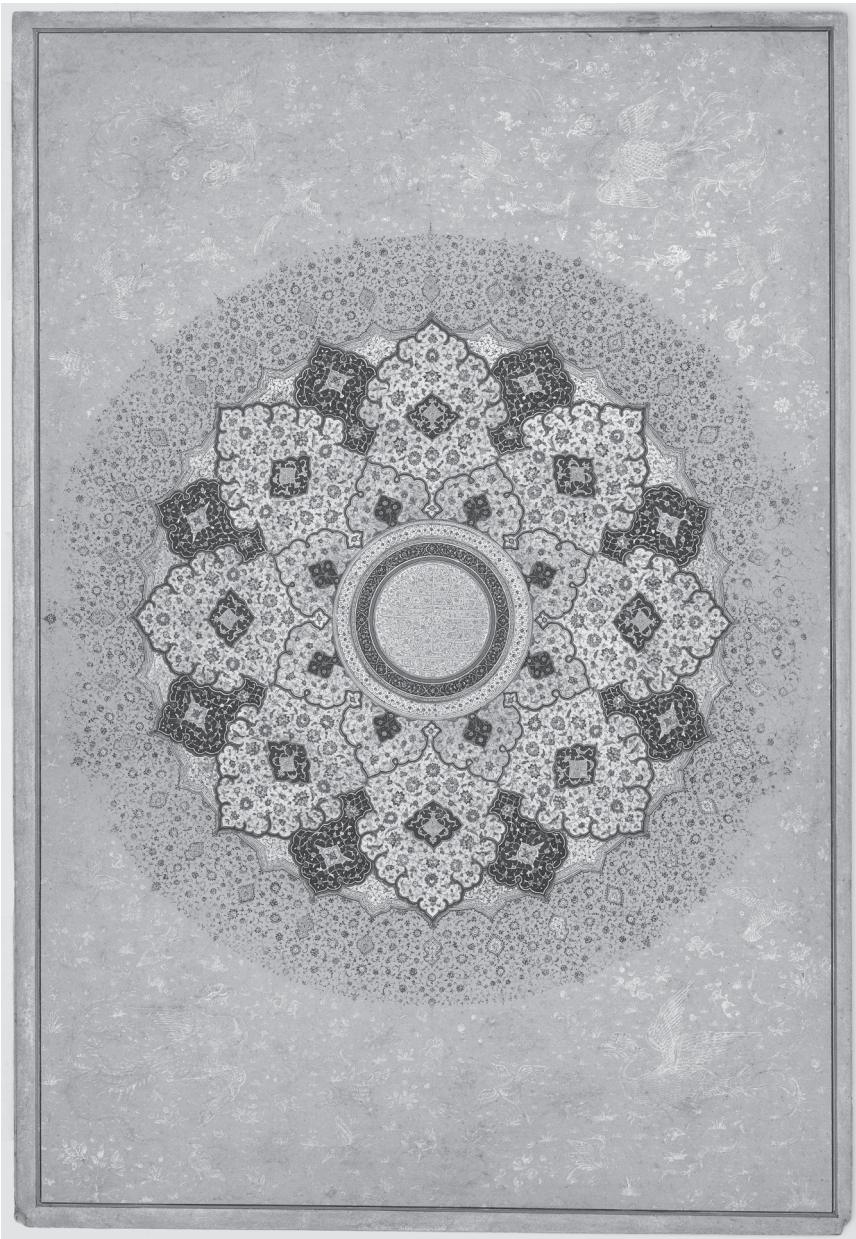


FIGURE 4.3 Rosette bearing the names and titles of Shah Jahan
 A *shamsa* (lit., “sun”) beautified by exotic flowers, mythical birds, and animals surrounds the Mughal imperial tughra at the center, which reads “His Majesty Shihabuddin Muhammad Shahjahan, the King, Warrior of the Faith, may God perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty.”
 Source: Folio from the Shah Jahan Album
 Date: c. 1645 (*recto*); c. 1630–40 (*verso*)
 Place of origin: India
 Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund and the Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 1955.
 55.121.10.39.

But the Mughal dynasty had articulated their sovereignty in an idiom that went beyond their spiritual dependency upon the Chishtis. At the height of his reign, which overlapped with the first millennial anniversary of Islam, Emperor Akbar had declared himself to be the greatest of all saints and above the stature of any holy man, Muslim or otherwise. This episode became known as the *Din-i Ilahi* (Divine Religion) controversy, in which the Mughal emperor was accused by many Muslim critics of abandoning Islam in favor of a new religion centered on the emperor himself. Although the official Mughal chronicle, composed a decade after the incident, denied that Akbar had abandoned Islam or created a new religion, it nevertheless maintained that the Mughal emperor was the holiest of men who enjoyed a sacred stature above that of any other saint or scholar of Islam and thus was fully capable of ruling independently in matters of religion. The Mughal claim to sacredness was derived from two key sources: Akbar's descent from Alanqoa, the mythical princess of pagan Mongol legend, who had given a miraculous fatherless birth to the line of Mughal kings after being impregnated by a ray of the sun; and his status as the millennial being inaugurating a new era of peace and justice as a Lord of Conjunction (*Sahib Qiran*) of Saturn and Jupiter that had taken place in 1582, close to the end of the first millennium of Islam (in 990 Hijri), and signaled the rise of a new sovereign and religious dispensation. This sacredness, which placed the Mughal emperor above the distinctions of religion, enabled him to declare a new religious policy of Universal Peace (*Sulh-i Kull*) according to which all religious and sectarian communities were given equal protection as long as they swore loyalty to the empire. For such a progressive religious policy to be implemented, the traditional reliance on the consensus of past Muslim jurists, for which the technical legal term was *taqlid* (imitation of tradition), had to be abandoned.

Akbar's innovative religious policy and millennial claims to sacredness presented court Sufis such as 'Abd al-Rahman Chishti with a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge was that the Chishtis were now allied with a dynasty that had a reputation at odds with orthodox Muslim opinion, both Sunni and Shi'i. Thus 'Abd al-Rahman takes great pains to show that Shah Jahan and his ancestors were still Sunni Muslims. At the end of *Mir'at al-Asrar*, he reports that although Shah Jahan's father, Jahangir (d. 1627), may have taken up the practice of praying to the sun (which was, according to the Alanqoa legend, the father of the Mughal imperial line), this was only to capture the cosmic powers of heavenly body, not to worship it.

Despite the taint of heresy and religious deviancy attached to Mughal imperial customs, the Chishti Sufis also were presented with an opportunity. By supporting the empire, they could promote a religious policy that resonated with the practice of religious coexistence that had existed for centuries at Chishti shrines, which opened their doors to Muslims, Hindus, and followers of other religions. This is what 'Abd al-Rahman set out to do in his praise and description

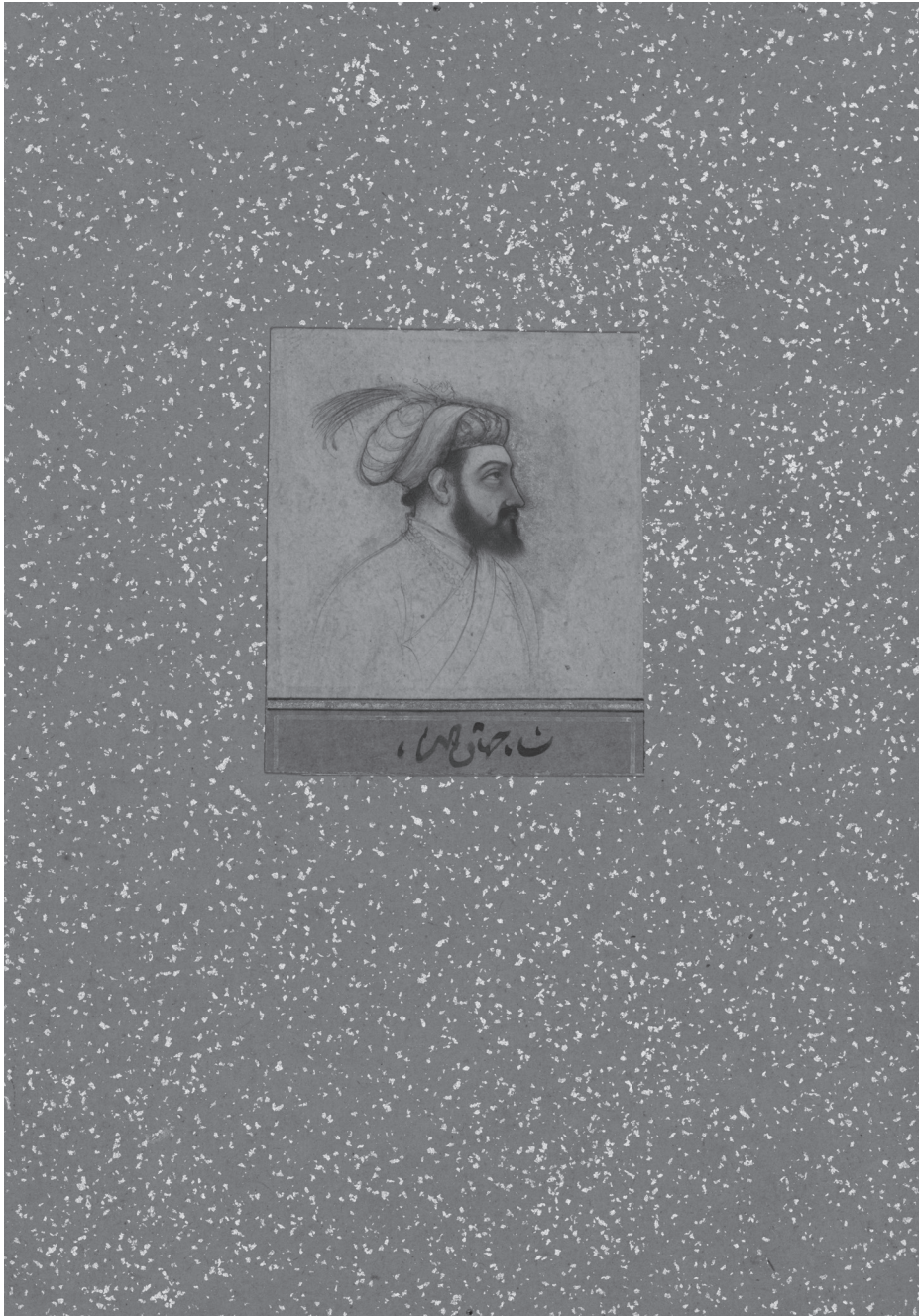


FIGURE 4.4 Portrait of Shah Jahan

A mid-seventeenth century portrait of the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan (d. 1666), on gold-sprinkled paper.

Source: Single leaf of a portrait of Shah Jahan. Walters Ms. W.700

Date: Mid-seventeenth century

Place of origin: India

Credit: Walters Art Museum

of Emperor Shah Jahan. Thus he celebrated the millennial birth of Shah Jahan, who had been born in 1000 Hijri. He affirmed the legend of Alanqoa. He equates Shah Jahan with his grandfather, Akbar, and with the founding Mughal ancestor, Amir Timur (d. 1405), whose title “Lord of Conjunction” had inspired Shah Jahan to call himself “Second Lord of Conjunction.” Finally, he lauds the policy of Universal Peace (*Sulh-i Kull*) that Shah Jahan had also continued after Akbar and Jahangir. The ideal of Universal Peace was based on the abandonment of *taqlid* (imitation), a key principle of jurisprudence that had seen a revival under the Sunni Ottomans and Uzbeks and the Shi‘i Safavids but at the expense of religious discrimination and sectarian violence. In the place of *taqlid*, ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti promoted *tahqiq* (the pursuit of divine truth), advocated by the great metaphysical thinker Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 1240), known as the Greatest Master (Shaykh-i Akbar), whose multivolume works were required reading for Sufi intellectuals. But for *tahqiq* to replace *taqlid* required a millennial sovereign such as Shah Jahan who, ‘Abd al-Rahman writes in the *Mir‘at al-Asrar*, was born a great emperor but died an accomplished saint.

TRANSLATION

Excerpts from The Mirror of Secrets (Mir‘at al-Asrar) of ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti

Avoid the path of *taqlid* and bigotry,
Erase the two from the slate of your heart.
The desirous self is the wind in bigotry sails,
By *taqlid* it brings disgrace to humanity.
Bigotry is an obstacle on the path of the seeker,
The way of *taqlid* is the way of destruction.
O God, destroy the rebellious self,
Throw bigotry out of our disposition.
Guide me to a realization (*tahqiq*) of unity (*tawhid*),
Release me from the prison of *taqlid*.

In the second volume of *Tazkira-i Awliya* [*Biography of Saints* by Farid al-Din ‘Attar, d. 1220], it is written that the reigning Caliph once asked Khwaja Abu al-Hasan Hisri, who is a spiritual successor of Khwaja Shibli, what school of jurisprudence (*mazhab*) did he follow. He replied, “I used to follow the path of Abu Hanifa, then adopted that of Imam Shafi‘i, and now I am absorbed in such a thing that I cannot recall anything of any other school.” He asked, “What is that thing?” He replied, “Sufism (*tasawwuf*).” He asked, “what is Sufism?” He said, “Sufism is that thing

without which nothing finds peace and contentment.” Khwaja Hafiz Shirazi has hinted at such a state when he says:

The war of seventy-two sects (of Islam) is to be forgiven;
When they cannot see the truth, they all tell their own version of it.

Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Maniri (d. c. 1380s) relates from Imam Abu ‘Abd Allah Qushayrin the commentary on the book *Adab al-Muridin* (*Etiquettes for Sufi Devotees* by Abu al-Najib al-Suhrawardi, d. 1168) that the devotee who associates himself with a particular school of jurisprudence is to be condemned because Sufis have no association with any of the different schools except the path of the people of Sufism (*ahl-i tasawwuf*), and the reasoned arguments (*hujjat*) of the people of Sufism in solving all religious issues are better than the reasoned arguments of all other people.

The principles of the school of Sufism are stronger because those belonging to the other schools are masters of transmitted and available knowledge or are experts in reasoning but the community of Sufi masters has progressed beyond all this. What is hidden for others is manifest for them, and what requires proofs for many is evident for them. The school of Sufism has an exterior and an interior aspect. The exterior aspect is that they are mindful of proper etiquette (*adab*), which is *shari‘at*. This means that they interact with ordinary people according to the manifest teachings of Islam. According to the rules of *shari‘at*, they pray for their needs but also help people in fulfilling their desires. The interior aspect of their school is that they always exist in a state and place of righteousness, and this is the reality of their school, that is, in secret they are co-seated with God. Because the order of reality is when God moves someone, he moves, and when He puts someone at rest, he rests. Real power remains with God, and man is simply a puppet. As Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Maniri has said—a statement also found in the writings of other Sufi shaykhs—the person who joins the people of the path and poverty adopts the school of jurisprudence of his Sufi master. Therefore, the King of Gnostics, Abu Yazid Bistami (d. 874 or 878), is of the school of Ja‘far Sadiq (the sixth Shi‘i Imam, d. 765). In following the path (*ṭariqat*), it is not appropriate for a disciple to follow the school of any other than that of his shaykh. He (Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Maniri) has written many words on this topic in his book *Sharh Adab al-Muridin* (*Commentary on ‘Etiquettes for Sufi Devotees’*). . . . In this way, this seeker of grace and writer of these words, that is, the worthless beggar, ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti son of ‘Abd al-Rasul ibn Qasim son of Shah Budh ‘Abbasi ‘Alavi, is also of the school of the masters of Chisht. Although this servant has benefited from so many Sufi orders that mentioning them all would prolong matters, he is a special beneficiary of the heaven-dwelling family of Chisht. . . . [A description of his spiritual genealogy and early training in Sufism follows].

Once, while undergoing training, this worthless one, to achieve one of the states achieved by this community (of Sufis), sat in meditation for forty days several times and pursued other ascetic exercises, but I did not reach my goal. It so happened

that in those very days, that is, the year 1030 Hijri, in the reign of the Emperor Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, may God's mercy be upon him, I read the book *Tazkirat al-Awliya'* (*Biography of Saints*) with complete supervision and conditions, from beginning to end, word by word. When I reached the section on the King of Gnostics, Bayazid Bistami's ascension to heaven (*mi'raj*), I achieved the state that I had always desired. Truth manifested itself. Verily, if knowledge of the lives of past masters had not been beneficial, the Lord would never have revealed the lives of prophets in the Qur'an to the prophet of God. As God has said (Qur'anic verse in Arabic), that is, "O Muhammad, we relate to you the conditions of peoples past so that your heart becomes stronger and satisfied."

So it was from this time that this worthless one's heart became possessed by the desire to collect from different books the lives and sayings of the blessed family of Chisht and write them down in one book in which there would also be a mention of the masters of other Sufi orders, generation by generation, who were contemporaries of one and another. But because for every deed there is an assigned time, some time went by before I could begin.

Now it is 1045 Hijri. I begin according to the spiritual (*batini*) instructions of the eminent guide and saint, Mu'in al-Haq wa al-Din Chishti, that is, in the reign of the Lord's Caliph, possessor of all unending perfections, the sultan of the times, along with justice and charity, may God keep his heart enlightened with the light of faith, and his body with the adherence of the *shari'at* of Muhammad Mustafa, that emperor who is entitled with the title of founder victorious commander of the faithful, the shooting star of religion, Muhammad Shah Jahan, Lord of Conjunction the Second (Sahib Qiran-i Sani). May God forever preserve his kingship and life. He is the son of Emperor Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir son of Emperor Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar son of Emperor Nasir al-Din Muhammad Humayun son of Emperor Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur son of Sultan 'Umar Shaykh Mirza son of Sultan Abu Sa'id Mirza son of Sultan Miran Shah Mirza son of Hazrat Amir Timur Lord of Conjunction (Sahib Qiran) whose genealogy is connected after fourteen generations to Nur Bakhar Qa'an son of Alanqoa.

This Alanqoa was a woman, adorned with the earthly and spiritual beauty, who was from among the children of Turk son of Japheth son of Noah. Her eminence Mary (mother of Jesus) was also from among the children of Sam son of Noah. So, in the same manner that God used his unique power to have Gabriel through touching or blowing spirit caused Hazrat Jesus to be born without a father, as the holy book bears witness to this act, "*Thus we sent to her (Mary's) side Gabriel who appeared the shape of a man (in front of Mary) and made manifest his beauty*" as has been stated in commentaries, God also used his power to have the world enlightening sun, who is the commander of the celestial and elemental worlds, take the shape of a man and penetrate Alanqoa and, with the power of God, Nur Bakhar Qa'an was born of her womb without a father. From that time the office of statehood and sovereignty was made manifest among the progeny of Nur Bakhar Qa'an son of Alanqoa and is so to this day.

God appointed Jesus to the rank of Prophethood so that he, after guiding the denizens of the world, is alive today in the witness of God on the fourth heaven, which is the place of the Great Light (Nayyir-i 'Azam) (the sun), and He endowed Amir Timur Gurigani with spiritual and material sovereignty (*valayat*), so that with the power and authority of the sovereignty of the sun, which is the preserve of the pole of sainthood (*qutb*), and with the blessings that come from following the prophecy of Muhammad, he [Timur] became the ruler of all the world and received the title of Lord of Conjunction (Sahib Qiran). Today, in his place, the just, the charitable, the learned, the gnostic, Emperor Shahab al-Din Muhammad Shah Jahan is a ruler of his ancestral lands and for this reason is entitled with the title of the Second Lord of Conjunction (Sahib Qiran-i Sani). May God with his unique blessing and the dear prophet's honor grant this worth-recognizing, essence-knowing and people-nurturing emperor a healthy life and grant his progeny honor till the end of time.

Since this book *Mir'at al-Asrar's* fifth section was completed in the reign of the true Caliph Emperor Shah Jahan, it is necessary to narrate his affairs. From history books and reliable people it is found that Prince Sultan Khurram (Shah Jahan) was born in the month of Rabi 'al-Awwal in the year 1000 Hijri. At that time, Emperor Akbar came to the palace and accepted his grandson as a son and made elaborate arrangements for his care. Thus for fourteen years the prince received training under the beneficent shadow of his grandfather. Based on his God-given knowledge [Akbar was known to be illiterate], Akbar used to say that little Khurram and I were born under the same astral sign (that is, the two of them shared the same cosmic destiny). After the death of his grandfather, Sultan Khurram outshone all his older brothers. When in 1022 Hijri Jahangir went for a pilgrimage to shrine of the saint Mu'in al-Din of Ajmer, he sent Prince Khurram with an army to subdue the rajas. Those campaigns were immensely successful, and the prince returned to his father in Ajmer. Because Prince Sultan Parviz had not met with success in the Deccan, Prince Khurram was sent in his place. There he gained numerous victories, Jahangir was happy enough with them to award him the title of World Emperorship (Shah Jahani), and this couplet was etched on the prince's seal:

God made the Emperor of the World with fortune high and justice
profuse,
King Khurram son of King Jahangir son of King Akbar

Afterward, Jahangir returned to Ajmer seven years later after traveling through Malwa and Gujarat. From there he arrived at Akbarabad (present day Agra). In those days, this poor soul, the writer of these words, was also accompanying Jahangir for a few days as part of an assembly in which he had organized a wonderful spiritual dialogue. At the time, the accomplished gnostic Mir Sayyid Ni'matullah

Qadiri, who later on became the pole (highest spiritual appointee or *quth*) in the province of Bengal, had come by the way of Deccan and Gujarat and was the deputy (*khalifa*) of Shah 'Alam Mahbub-i 'Alam. The vessel of perfection Makhдум Shaykh 'Usman, a resident of Bayana, had also come to Akbarabad to participate in that gathering. For one year, this worthless one and Mir Sayyid Ni'matullah learned from Shaykh 'Usman every day.

One day, Mir Sayyid Ali told Shaykh 'Usman that Jahangir called Sayyid Muhammad Mastur for a private audience in the night and said, "My heart bears witness to your spiritual knowledge (*irfan*). This is why I am going to tell you about my spiritual state, that is, I am a Muslim and my ancestors were also Muslim and followers of truth. In the prayers I repeat morning and evening, as God knows best, I do not worship the sun but say these Divine Names to subjugate (*taskhir*) the sun so that it becomes my agent, because certain past rulers, philosophers, and Sufi masters have made use of the subjugation of the planets, as is found in the sayings of your honored Sufis. You must believe me when I say that I am a seeker of truth with my heart and soul. If you order me, I can even give up my kingship, but there are two things that I am unable to do and am powerless in this. One is to give up wine, to which I am accustomed to since childhood. Second, to pray five times a day regularly is difficult for me. For God's sake, show me the right path."

Mir Sayyid Muhammad said, "Our masters have taught that the first pillar (of Islam) is to offer timely prayers and to abstain from wine. But you have entered the circle of God's friends because of the blessings of your good intentions. God has created every person for an appointed task. He has granted you His caliphate and granted His kingdom to you. So your duty is to protect your God-given kingdom and meet the needs of the people with justice. Keep God in your mind at all times and remain conscious of His Absolute Power. Your faith consists in this and nothing else." Shaykh 'Usman was very pleased to hear of the king's conversation and prayed for him.

One day Emperor Jahangir in his gracious kindness invited Shah Jahan to a private audience and said, "Baba [a term of endearment], seek knowledge because knowledge is necessary for the worship of God and the affairs of the state. My dear father [Emperor Akbar] always used to give me counsel to pursue knowledge because it is difficult to manage the affairs of state without learning from the books of history and the writings of Sufis. In this day and age, Shaykh Sufi is the master of these above mentioned fields. Learn from him. He is a righteous man and a fountain of knowledge."

Shaykh Sufi, after mastering the transmitted and the rational sciences, swore allegiance to Shaykh Nizam al-Din of Ambeth and after his death went to Gujarat and there learned for many years from Shaykh Wajih al-Din Gujarati who was the deputy (*khalifa*) of Shaykh Muhammad Ghaws of Gwalior. There he received a certificate in *Fusus al-Hikam* and *Futuhāt Makkiyya* (Ibn 'Arabi's *Bezels of Wisdom* and *The Meccan Revelations*), and he wrote a delightful commentary on the *Fusus*. He was unrivaled in the esoteric sciences (*'ilm-i haqa'iq*,

an expression also used for the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabi), which is why Makhdumi Shaykh Hatim Ibrahimabadi received his certificate in the *Fusus* from him. The worthless writer of these words received his certificate in the *Fusus* from Shaykh Hatim. This worthless one also entered the presence of Shaykh Sufi many times. He is counted among the servants of God, may He bless him.

In any case, this worthless one remained in Akbarabad for a while and saw that every day Shaykh Sufi went to Shah Jahan and taught him from the history *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* (*Generations of the Age of Nasir*, written by Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani in 1260 CE) and the next day from the letters of Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Maniri. As part of the process, he also taught the prince from the sciences of Qur’anic exegesis and the traditions of the Prophet as well as the terminology of the Sufis and the sum of many other rare sciences, and informed him about the path of Sunni Islam, which is based on transmitted texts and which has been followed by all venerable Sufis. When, in 1028 Hijri, Jahangir left for the first time for a tour of Kashmir, so this worthless one left Akbarabad for his home and devoted himself to meditation and ascetic exercises.

The emperor fell ill upon his return from Kashmir. The cause was that, according to divine custom, at that time the protection of the emperor’s dominion was in the hands of Shaykh Pir Shattari, who was among the *awtad* (“pegs,” a high spiritual rank but lower than that of the axis or “*qutb*”), but the responsibility for protecting the person of the emperor was in the hands of my master, Shaykh Hamid Chishti who had passed away in 1032 Hijri, and no other had been appointed in his place. Thus the emperor fell severely ill. When his condition did not improve for some years, he could no longer tend to the affairs of the state, and the Queen Nur Jahan took over most of the work. She was a woman of defective intellect (*naqis al-‘aql*). She supported Prince Shaharyar and began to oppose Shah Jahan, which caused chaos and disorder. On the other side, the emperor’s condition worsened until that just sovereign, after twenty-three years of rule, in the month of Safar, 1027 Hijri, died on the way to Kashmir and was buried in Lahore. May God’s mercy be upon him.

Shah Jahan, who had left for Deccan because of Queen Nur Jahan’s mischief, arrived in Akbarabad on 7 Jamadi al-Awwal and ascended the throne. As a result, the entire country, which had suffered ruin, experienced a revival and an era of justice and order began. God had awarded the emperor a strong inclination toward Sunni Islam. Without any prejudice, he would be mindful of the Qur’an and hadith in all matters. According to the Qur’anic verse, “O Prophet, say to the people that I do not expect any payment from you except devotion to the relatives [of the Prophet],” and the hadith tradition, “My people of the [Prophet’s] house are like the ship of Noah,” the emperor was constant in his love for the descendants of the Prophet and his companions.

One day the emperor asked Mir Sayyid Jalal ibn Mir Sayyid Muhammad Bukhari, who was Shah ‘Alam Mahbub-i ‘Alam Gujarati’s successor, about his conviction in the matter of Prophet’s companion and his family. He replied that

my noble ancestor Hazrat Makhdum Jahaniyan Sayyid Jalal al-Din Bukhari had received religious education from the Suhrawardiyya order and the leader of this order, Shaykh Shahab al-Din 'Umar's (d. 1234), beliefs are to be found in the book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif* (*Knowledge of the Gnostics*). I also hold these convictions. He sent for the *'Awarif al-Ma'arif* and studied it. This is what is written in it:

The appropriate belief is that one should express devotion for all the [Prophet's] companions and preference for none. If love for any one of them should overwhelm the heart, then it should be kept secret because its expression is not necessary. But in the matter of the difference that arose between Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali and Amir Mu'awiya, our conviction is that Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali was true in his sovereignty (*khilafat*) and legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) and more competent in the matters of the caliphate, and that Amir Mu'awiya was not in the right and not deserving of the caliphate.

Upon hearing this, the emperor said that, Praise be to God, this is also my conviction.

Once the emperor presented himself in the service of the Refuge of the Gnostics, Shaykh Miyan Mir of Lahore, who was the chief of the individual mystics. During a conversation, he asked a question about the matter of the caliphate. The shaykh, in his erudite wisdom, simply said, "Since you possess many books of commentary and prophetic traditions, why ask me? Whatever goes against Holy Scripture, do not believe in it and stay silent. God has said, "There is nothing wet and nothing dry that is not in the Qur'an." "

The emperor became very glad upon hearing these wise words, and began to praise the shaykh's intellect and foresight. Also, he gained the true answer he was seeking. That is to say, everyone is familiar with the emperor's policy of Sulh-i Kull (Universal Peace). When the Uzbek ruler of Turan conquered Iran, overwhelmed by sectarian prejudice, he put to the sword countless descendants of the Prophet, 'ulama', and notables, and came to be known as the "Khariji" ("Seceder," a label originally used for an early group of Muslims who rejected the caliphate of 'Ali). When the emperor of Iran conquered Turan, he too killed several thousand 'ulama' and notables and became known as the "Rafizi" ("Refuser," a label originally used for early Muslims, supporters of 'Ali, who rejected the caliphate of the first three caliphs before 'Ali). But, when Shah Jahan defeated 'Ali Mardan Khan and took the province of Qandahar, he did not harm a single person. Instead, he rewarded everyone according to their station with rank and estate. Similarly, when he conquered the province of Balkh from the ruler of Turan, he did not persecute anyone there but rewarded all according to what they deserved and brought them to his side. He did not let the principle of moderation out of his sight, and thus did not invite divine wrath. This steadfastness is akin to grace because he did not stray from the letter of Qur'an and hadith. When the rightful caliph's justice became famous, people of every country, every nation, and every religion began to come to Hindustan to achieve their desires. The people of Hinduism were also content in their place, but the rightful caliph's heart was so suffused with the brotherhood and equality of

the religion of Muhammad that every group loved Muslims, and Hindus and Fire Worshipers had become so obedient and submissive that in every alley and marketplace cows used to be slaughtered but no one would object and look upon this with hate, but instead they would willingly and lovingly give their daughters to the emperor and his courtiers. Despite this dominance of Islam, I did not find a single person who held a grievance against the rightful caliph, and the reason for this was that the emperor of Islam was without bigotry and followed the commandments of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet.

The emperor had four sons and he had given each of them, since childhood, training in the religious sciences and principles of governance, and appointed them at the head of an army. He named the oldest son, Prince Dara Shikuh, as the heir appointed and kept him in his presence. Prince Shuja was given the governorate of Bengal. Deccan was given to Prince Aurangzeb. Prince Muradbakhsh was made ruler of Gujarat. Although all the princes lived gloriously like emperors, they remained firmly loyal and obedient to their lord father. In this manner, for thirty-two years, the imperial dominion was managed with peace and magnanimity and the emperor along with his princes pursued the business of religion and the world, and looked after his people. Amir Timur had also reigned for thirty-two years. But in the end, after the highpoint of well-being and blessing, the meaning of the verse of the Qur'an, "Today I perfected for you, your religion, and I completed upon you my blessing," manifested itself and the sun of the emperor's good fortune came to set. At the time, Shaykh Firuz, who was among the seven "Abdals" ("Substitutes," a spiritual rank of sainthood) and was appointed to the protection of the emperor, passed away from this life in the month of Ramadan, and the emperor's health began to fail. After some time, that is, on 8 Zul Hajj, 1067 Hijri, he became violently ill and this humble servant, who was appointed to protect the emperor's sovereignty also fell ill on 12 Zul Hajj 1067 and for several years remained in his sickbed because of which the work of protecting the country could not be accomplished despite the fact that other appointees had also been present. But in the face of divine will, no way could be found and disorder spread in all directions and all the princes became claimants to the throne.

First of all, Prince Muhammad Shuja' raised the flag of rebellion in Bengal. Prince Dara Shikuh gave his oldest son Muhammad Sulayman Shikuh a huge army and brought Prince Shuja' to an end. This army had not yet returned when Prince Aurangzeb and Prince Muradbakhsh arrived at Akbarabad with a grand army. Dara Shikuh had no choice but to leave the emperor in the fortress of Akbarabad on his sickbed and to take the imperial army in battle against his brothers. But despite much effort, Dara Shikuh suffered clear defeat and left for Lahore. The emperor was greatly disappointed upon seeing this but despite his illness was not able to do much or to take matters of state in his own hand. So he decided to take up quiet abode in the fortress of the Akbarabad, and Prince Aurangzeb, with the consensus of the 'ulama' of the time, in the month of Ramadan in 1068 Hijri in Shah Jahanabad (Delhi), ascended the throne and had the Friday sermon read in his name.

It was divine commandment that Emperor Shah Jahan ended his day in the circle of the renouncers of this world, and in the afterlife he will be raised among the friends of God (that is, as a saint) because for seven years he remained busy in the worship of God, the recitation of the Qur'an, the study of the books of exegesis and prophetic traditions and gave away a large amount of gold to the poor and down-trodden. Finally on 26 Rajab 1067 Hijri, Shahab al-Din Muhammad Shah Jahan, the Second Lord of Conjunction, departed for the eternal world. His and his wife's tomb had already been constructed in Akbarabad on the banks of the Jamuna River. The emperor, according to his will, was buried there.

NOTES

1. Translated selections are from 'Abd al-Rahmaan Chishti, *Mir'at al-Asrar* (Urdu translation), trans. Wahid Baksh Sayyal Chishti Sabri (Lahore: Ziya al-Qur'an, 1993), 52–57, 1255–63.

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FIGURE 5.1 Reception at the court of Shah 'Abbas I

The reception at the court of Shah 'Abbas I from a *muraqqa'* dates to the early seventeenth century. The album includes various portraits of Zand and Qajar courtiers, as well as French and English religious prints.

Source: Album of Persian and Indian miniatures, calligraphy, and European engravings. Walters Ms. W.771, fol. 50a

Date: Seventeenth century–nineteenth century

Places of origin: Iran, India, and Europe

Credit: Walters Art Museum

5. The King's Deathbed: Coronation, Execution, and Fratricide

Succession to the imperial throne was a fundamental political problem at the heart of dynastic rule, and none of the three empires found a single peaceful solution for the transfer of absolute power once the reigning emperor died. This often led to brutal factionalism within their courts, and filicide, blinding of eligible claimants, and civil wars became unnervingly customary. The practice of sending princes to distant provinces to train in military and administrative matters and to hold provincial courts had produced powerful royal factions and rivals, which exacerbated an already difficult political problem. Moreover, the three empires had inherited the Turco-Mongol tradition of cooperative sovereignty in which all male (and in theory female) members of the paramount clan could compete for the throne, leading to incessant enmities among the ruling family.

As Zahit Atçıl explains in the second essay in this chapter, Mehmed II (r. 1451–1481), the Ottoman sultan and the conqueror of Constantinople, finally formalized the practice of fratricide within Ottoman dynastic law to ensure continuity of rule and to prevent the fragmentation of his empire. At a critical junction in the later sixteenth century, when his descendant Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was nearing the end of his life, the struggle for the throne intensified among two of his sons, Selim and Bayezid. The conflict ceased to be an internal Ottoman affair when their archenemy, Safavid Shah Tahmasb, welcomed Bayezid to his court and attempted to exploit the struggle. Nearly a decade earlier Shah Tahmasb himself had faced a similar situation when his brother Alqas defected to Sultan Suleiman, who then equipped Alqas with a large army to invade Iran and dethrone him.

The brutal account of Prince Bayezid's demise is recorded in detail by the Ottoman historian Mustafa Ali and is excerpted below.

As the result of such conflicts and in an attempt to find another solution to the problem of succession, the right of primogeniture was instituted during the seventeenth century to replace fratricide, and the "gilded cage system" was favored. Princes were then raised in the palace rather than being sent to rule the provinces where they could form their own power base. The custom of primogeniture had been exercised in the Safavid house even before its establishment as a dynasty and continued to be the preferred method for the transfer of power, although not without difficulty.

Along with their Ottoman and Mughal contemporaries, the Safavids had inherited the Turco-Mongol tradition of cooperative sovereignty and the long-held practice of dispatching princes to the provinces so that they might learn the crafts of governance and warfare. However, after the death of Shah 'Abbas in 1629, the Safavids privileged the gilded cage system, grooming the heir apparent at court in Isfahan. This practice reduced the violence attending succession to some extent, but it often produced indolent rulers who cared little for state affairs, military matters, and the equitable exercise of power.

In the first essay in this chapter, Sholeh Quinn explores the rather peaceful succession and coronation of Shah Safi I, who succeeded Shah 'Abbas the Great, through the study of two contemporary chronicles, Iskandar Beg's *Zayl-i 'Alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi* and Muhammad Ma'sum Isfahani's *Khulasat al-Siyar*. This seemingly peaceful transfer of power, however, was followed by Safi's brutal elimination of several Safavid princes in an effort to secure his throne.

The Mughal royal family faced a similar predicament to that of the other two empires when it came to the issue of succession. In the final essay of the chapter, Jane Mikkelsen analyzes a set of sources pertaining to the struggle for the Mughal throne that took place between two major contenders, Aurangzeb and his brother Dara Shukuh, following the death of their father, Shah Jahan in 1658. In this instance of war of succession, primogeniture was not observed; Aurangzeb ousted his older brother and became at last the uncontested Mughal emperor. The sources presented here include a letter written by Jahanara, a powerful Mughal princess, to her brother Aurangzeb in a last-ditch effort to prevent the breakout of clashes between the two brothers. This is followed by an excerpt from Muhammad Saqi Musta'idd Khan's history, the *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri* (completed in 1710), which offers an official version of the events that is predictably biased in favor of the victorious Aurangzeb and unforgiving in its portrayal of Dara Shukuh. The third source is a translation of Aurangzeb's letter to his son, composed during his later years when he was nearing his own death. In this extraordinary letter, Aurangzeb reflects on the events surrounding his ascent to power as well as the future prospects of his empire. Finally, we have a set of lyric poems by Dara Shukuh, which were written prior to the conflict and his ultimate execution, that reveal him to be an ambitious political actor at the center of power in contrast to the prevailing views of him as a pacifist. By providing source material across genres, Mikkelsen's analysis and translation offers us a multidimensional view of a crucial problem at the center of dynastic rule, one that was never fully resolved.

I. In the Shadow of Shah ‘Abbas

THE SUCCESSION OF SHAH SAFI (R. 1629–1642)

SHOLEH A. QUINN

Shah Safi (d. 1642) ruled over Safavid Iran after the death of his grandfather, the renowned Shah ‘Abbas, who died at his summer palace in Mazandaran on January 19, 1629/24 Jumada I, 1038, after a long and eventful reign during which he restored centralized rule to Iran and embarked on conquests against the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. Although Shah ‘Abbas had caused many potential rivals to the throne (his sons) to be blinded or murdered, he had made provisions for his succession by appointing his grandson Sam Mirza (later Shah Safi) as his heir.

Despite these prior arrangements, there was concern that the succession plan would be challenged, and indeed one of Shah ‘Abbas’s sons, Imam Quli Mirza, who was apparently only partially blinded, claimed that he could see and made a claim to the throne. Consequently, leading government officials tried to hold Sam Mirza’s coronation as soon as possible.

This essay consists of excerpts from two chronicles that narrate this important moment in Safavid history, describing the various ceremonies associated with Sam Mirza becoming the new king of Safavid Iran on January 29, 1629, and changing his name to Shah Safi.¹ The first is the *Zayl-i ‘Alam-ara-yi ‘Abbasi* (1632).² Written by Shah ‘Abbas’s celebrated chronicler Iskandar Beg Munshi, this chronicle is a continuation of the author’s earlier *Tarikh-i ‘Alam-ara-yi ‘Abbasi*, a very well-known Safavid source focusing on the reign of Shah ‘Abbas, which also contains an account of Shah Safi’s accession. The second chronicle is Muhammad Ma’sum ibn Khvajagi Isfahani’s *Khulasat al-Siyar* (1052/1642).³ Written some ten years after Iskandar Beg’s history, the *Khulasat al-Siyar* contains many details not found in the *Zayl-i ‘Alam-ara-yi ‘Abbasi*.

Iskandar Beg's account is interesting due to the ways it deviates from his earlier chronicle. Using his *Tarikh-i 'Alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi* as a model, in imitative language he adds the presence of sayyids (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) and clerics ('*ulama*') to the ceremony, replaces a reference to a prayer carpet as the family heirloom used in the coronation with a throne, and replaces the ceremony of kissing the king's feet with general congratulations. In making these changes, Iskandar Beg appears to be distancing the new king from his Sufi followers, even though they played a central role in burying the late king. Removing the Sufi symbol that was central to Safavid coronation ceremonies was the most obvious way he accomplished this, but he also inserted into his later account the participation of sayyids and clerics in the ceremony, thereby stressing that the witnesses to that practice—and indeed those who legitimized it—were religious clerics, even though the custom and practice were generally Sufi in nature.

Isfahani's account, in contrast, describes how they enthroned the new king by tying the sword and the belt of Shah Isma'il to his waist, and sounding the drum and flute at the coronation. He then describes a second coronation, which apparently took place on the day after the first coronation. This second ceremony was performed by the great Islamic philosopher and founder of the "Isfahan school of philosophy," Mir Damad (c. 1561-62–1630-31). Chronicles form one of the most important sources for Safavid history, so it is important to compare and contrast different accounts of the same events.⁴

TRANSLATION

Iskandar Beg Munshi, Zayl-i 'Alam-'ara-yi 'Abbasi

On that very day and hour, which was the fourth of the month of Jumada II (29 January 1629), in the presence of several members of the powerful sayyids and clerics, and in accordance with the customs and practice of the Sufis of the Safavid order, they placed him on the throne of the sultanate and the seat of spiritual guidance, which was an inheritance established by the choicest of ancestors and forbears, and they congratulated him with all sincerity. The mouths of the truth-speaking ones opened in uttering congratulations and felicitations, and the din of the kingly drum of his triumphant excellency was loudly sounded, such that kingly renown and the fame of his imperial coronation was spread throughout the corners and reaches of the kingdoms. They chose his blessed, elevated name—through the guidance of the hidden glad tidings emanating from the famed name of his famous father, and his most great, high-ranking grandfather—to be "Shah Safi."

Through the power of his great fortune, and the rising star of esteemed good omen, that happy rising star of auspicious fortune (Shah Safi) placed the foot of prosperity and victory upon the throne of kingship and the seat of rulership, and the high throne of the pillar of the sultanate was established in the elevated fourth

heaven as he was situated upon the throne of his great ancestor. Nobles and dignitaries gathered at his heavenly court and in the imperial palace. The din of the congratulations and the sound of the felicitations from people high and low arose from left and right, and the heavenly ranking orator uttered this call: "Praise be to God, who has, through his grace, returned truth to his people."

And the people loosened their tongues in prayer, and chanted this song:

Congratulations, for the throne of kingship is for you
 And the lamp of sovereignty is lit through you
 May the regulations of the state be renewed through you
 May your titles be loudly voiced
 May the throne of kingship be under your feet
 And the crown of the shadow of God be on your forehead

When the learned ones of the city and the astrologers knowledgeable about time looked into the matter, they realized that, from among the wonders of circumstances and the marvels of occurrences, the time of the propitious coronation was fixed at an hour that was considered extremely auspicious. From among all the bad stars and auspicious stars in the heavens, the coronation was fixed at the pinnacle of honor and joy. However much they studied their astrological tables and searched their almanacs for that year and the year after, mindful of the circumstances of the lord of fortune (Shah Safi), they did not find an hour as auspicious for the kingly coronation within six months' time. It will be clear to those endowed with insight into the world of meaning, and to those knowledgeable about the moments of sublime degrees, that this beginning will result in prosperity and stability and the perpetuation of the life and good fortune of the Lord of the Advent (Shah Safi).

The blinded prince Imam Quli Mirza, the natural son of the world conquering ruler (Shah 'Abbas) who, during the time of his great father, was engaged in speaking insincerely, and had manifested every kind of injustice in his unwise deeds, faced the consequences of his acts, and claimed that he could see. His claims to the sultanate and to the successorship of his paradise-ranking father reached a high point. When the prince was faced with the saying, "He bestows the kingdom on whomsoever he willeth" (Qur'an 3:26–27) in the esteemed name of this victory-bannered king, he could not get any result from his endeavors, and with the efforts of the well-wishers, all at once his rebellion-seeking eye was prevented from witnessing what he sought. His immature desire, which he had devised within himself, did not succeed. The full implication of the noble verse, which had been taken as a prognostication of patience, now was made manifest. In the most eloquent way, it was said that if at that time, his holiness would not go to Isfahan, the abode of the sultanate, the perception was that various types of oppositional rebellions and insurrections would take place in that rebellious group, and as a result of the uprisings of the common people and the opportunists,

days of great revolution would occur, and these would become the cause of the fear among the people of God.

Consequently, three days after sending Lala Beg, the pillars of the powerful state brought the perfumed coffin of that protected one (Shah 'Abbas), with the mercy of the one who is living and who dieth not (God), along with the women of the royal household, and accompanied by the royal workshops and the kingly retinues. They turned their faces from Mazandaran toward Isfahan, and they journeyed there stage by stage. When they reached Kashan, the perfumed coffin [of Shah 'Abbas] was placed in the lofty light-diffusing threshold of the Imamzadah Habib Musa—may blessings and praise be upon his ancestors. For three days they engaged in the customs of mourning and remembrance. After feeding the poor and appointing the servants and protectors and others, they left. On February 17, 1629, they entered Isfahan, and were highly honored with the privilege of kissing the exalted king's feet. Prayers and praise of the king were offered, and the eyes of their hope were illumined by witnessing the world-adorning beauty of luminous fortune. The rust of sorrow and sadness, which had darkened the mirror of the minds of the lords of faith, due to the helpless episode at that paradise-like place, was polished away. The bud of the hearts of the well-wishers began to bloom like spring flowers from happiness and joy, and the tongues of the sincere ones who chose the society of servitude, in praise and gratitude of his holiness the creator, prayed for the prosperity of the young-fortuned monarch. In this speech it was stated:

(RHYMING POEM (MASNAVI) BY THE AUTHOR)

Praise be to God through whom, with divine kindness,
the throne of kingship was embellished
Once again, from the kindness of God
The world found freshness like the flowers of a garden
Both the crown and the throne increased their joy
from the fortune of the king of kings of young fortune
Oh God! until there is a sign from the world,
may this young new ruler live an eternity.

Through divine inspiration, more than ten people coincidentally composed the same chronogram, *zill-i haqq* (the shadow of truth=1038/1628-9), in connection with the date of that auspicious one's coronation. This matter is also clear proof and demonstrative evidence that the shadow of justice and good fortune of that throne-adorned of the world-holding palace will be cast for many years over all of the peoples of the world and its various inhabitants, and the generality of the people at the time of his rule will be under the shadow of his holiness's kindness and well-being. The eloquent poets and the speakers of the time have mentioned several pleasing chronograms, each of which is proof of the blessedness and stability in this famed, powerful king's ability to hold the world. They have said that this hemistich is also

a chronogram and is from among the hidden inspirations and certain signs: "Safi placed his foot upon the kingly throne" (= AH 1038/1628–29). And during this melancholy time, winter finally came to an end, and the age of the world-adorning spring, like the promise of Khusraw Jamshid, the glorious, began with a hundred ornaments and glories. The prosperous and joy-increasing new year arrived with blessedness and auspiciousness.

Khulasat al-Siyar, by Isfahani

On the night of Monday, 4 Jumada II 1038 Hijri [January 29, 1629], some of the clerics and officials, like Mirza Habib Allah, son of Sayyid Husayn Mujtahid Jabal al-'Amili, Mulla Hasan 'Ali, son of Mulla 'Abd Allah Shushtari, and Mirza Ghazi, son of Hakim Kashifi Yazdi, and others were consulted. And at that same felicitous hour, they tied the belt and sword of his holiness, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction (*sahib-qirani*), the paradise-situated Shah Isma'il—may God emblazon his proofs—to his waist, and in the 'Ali Qapu building, they adorned his worthy existence with the throne and the crown, and in the place of his high-ranking grandfather, they sat him upon the throne of kingship. In celebrating that great gala, they caused the sound of the drums and flute to reach the ears of the dwellers of the seven climes. Once again they raised the victorious banners of the world-encompassing caliphate and the auspicious standards of the sultanate and conquest, and a group who at that time was seated in the shadow of the wing of the bird of good fortune was honored with kissing his feet. On that night, the exalted name of that one of elevated good fortune became established as Shah Safi and became known among the people of the world.

The next day, when the bride of the of the sun of felicity came out gracefully from the hidden veil of the heavens for the coronation of that chosen one of the lord of lords, he (Shah Safi) faced the rushing crowds of people at the door of the kingly palace, each one willing to give their lives for him, waiting to circumambulate the threshold of heaven.

That day itself, which was the bearer of the light of happiness, was aware that the shelter of truth and knowledge, and the sovereignty-sheltering one of truth and learning, the confluence of rationality and transmitted knowledge, with all its branches and roots, the unveiler of inner and outer ciphers, the lord of goodness and righteousness, the Seal of the Jurists (*mujtahid*)—Amir Muhammad Baqir Damad, may the peace of God the most elevated be upon him and protect his existence from calamities until the day of catastrophe—was ready to replicate the matter of the coronation at that auspicious time. After fulfilling the conditions of supplicating and reciting the first chapter of the Qur'an, he once more situated that one ornamented with the crown and the throne in the aforementioned edifice upon the throne of the sultanate and the seat of good fortune. A group of warriors (*ghazi*) and intimate victorious ones, who on that night had not yet been privileged with kissing the honored threshold, along with older and younger people, and the lords and the inhabitants of

Isfahan, were honored with kissing the ground of the fortunate threshold, and raised their heads with pride to the pinnacle of the heavens.

On that same day, according to the command, a missive of obedience was written and circulated to the amirs and the governors and the mayors and the elders of the guarded kingdom, and it became a consolation to these people's minds. In going through the contents of that missive, it was determined that each one of the governors and the possessors of offices, [who] by order, was diligent in engaging in his own business and important matters, should not consider there to be any changes or alterations in its rules, and should offer their great selves in protecting and guarding the frontiers and places under their control.

On Friday the eighth of the same month, according to the command of the elevated shadow of God, a full group was convened in the King's Mosque, and the Seal of the Jurists (*mujtahid*) (Mir Damad) delivered an eloquent sermon in the famed name of the auspicious ruler (Shah Safi).

On Saturday the ninth they dealt with the matter of dinars and dirhems, stamping the coins with a special imprint, and completed that task.

The first decree that was issued forth from the tongue of inspiration was regarding the taxes/earnings (*ikhraja*t) from the excavation of the water from the Kurang river, which every year accounted for close to 50,000 *tumans* from the guarded kingdoms. The deceased king (Shah 'Abbas), who had in mind the improvement of Isfahan, had wanted them to divert the above-mentioned water to Isfahan. When it became apparent to the auspicious king (Shah Safi) that it would not be possible to make it flow from its original outlet quickly, he put an end to its diversion from the expectations of people high and low.

Regarding the Gilani silk which, for the well-being of the kingdom, and due to the stamp tax, had been forbidden for merchants to take to Anatolia, because there would have been great profits from the earnings that would go to their [Ottoman] armies, he ordered that the mentioned ban be set aside and said it could be sold to anyone.

He also gave permission for the smoking of tobacco, because the hardship that those old households had gone through [due to the previous ban], had caused them to be burned in the fire of deprivation.

NOTES

1. For more information on this event, see Sholeh A. Quinn, "Coronations in Safavid Chronicles," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 311–31; and Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid King Who Was Crowned Twice: The Enthronement of Safi Mirza as Shah Safi II in 1666, and as Shah Sulayman in 1668," in *Mapping Safavid Iran*, ed. Nobuaki Kondo (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2015), 67–98.

2. Iskandar Beg (Munshi) Turkman and Muhammad Yusuf, *Zayl-i tarikh-i 'alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, ed. Suhayl Khvansari (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Islamiyyah, 1938), 7–10.
3. Muhammad Ma'sum ibn Khvajagi Isfahani, *Khulasat al-siyar*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Intisharat-i 'Ilmi, 1989), 37–39.
4. For an introduction to Safavid historical writing, see Sholeh Quinn and Charles Melville, "Safavid Historiography," in *Persian Historiography: History of Persian Literature*, vol. 10, ed. Charles Melville (New York: Persian Heritage Foundation, Columbia University, 2012), 209–57.

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II. The Ottoman Conception of Sovereignty and Succession

MUSTAFA ALI'S *ESSENCE OF HISTORY*
(*KUNH AL-AKHBAR*)

ZAHIT ATÇIL

The Ottoman conception of sovereignty owed significantly to the Turco-Mongol tradition of the Steppe in that sovereignty was accepted as the collective property of the whole dynastic family, and, in theory, every male member of the family had the right to the kingdom. Unlike other examples of this tradition, the Ottoman system did not support the division of the kingdom among the princes, and much effort was made to keep the land unified. This led to brutal competitions among powerful princes, who had acquired experience in provincial administration, and the practice of frequent fratricide, especially immediately after the death of a ruling sultan (or as he neared death), became common place. Over time fratricide became entrenched in the political culture of the Ottomans, and it was codified within dynastic law (*Kanunname-i Al-i Osman*) by Mehmed II (r. 1451–1481). Mehmed, without reservation articulated this law of expediency: “For the welfare of the state, the one of my sons to whom God grants the sultanate may lawfully put his brothers to death. A majority of the ‘ulama’ consider this permissible.”¹

The most significant competitions for the imperial throne occurred in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. First, following the death of Mehmed II (r. 1451–1481), two of his sons, Bayezid and Cem, competed for the throne until the latter’s death in Rome while he was held captive under the jurisdiction of the Papacy. Then the sons of Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) began their struggle for the throne, which culminated in the ascension of the youngest surviving son, Selim (r. 1512–1520), who sent his father to retirement and killed all other claimants.



FIGURE 5.2 Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent wearing the jewel-studded helmet

This impressive four-tiered jeweled crown belonged to Sultan Suleiman and was the centerpiece of a collection of royal jewelry fashioned by Venetian goldsmiths for the Ottoman ruler. This particular design was modeled after the three-tiered tiara of the pope and was meant to display Suleiman's claim to universal sovereignty, a contentious ideological concern of the early modern empires. Art historians believe that crown was put on public display in the Doge's Palace in Venice in 1532, providing the opportunity for the artist to study the piece for this woodcut.

Artist: Anonymous. Likely Venetian or Italian, sixteenth century

Date: c. 1540–50

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1942. 42.41.1

Perhaps the cruelest struggle for succession arose in 1550s, when Suleiman the Magnificent grew old and increasingly withdrew from daily politics. The principal factions in the dispute were Hurrem (d. 1558), the sultan's favorite wife and one of the most powerful members of the Ottoman household, and Prince Mustafa (d. 1553), the son of another royal wife, influential and well-liked by the troops. Hurrem endeavored to save the lives of her sons (Mehmed, Selim, Bayezid, and Cihangir) from Mustafa should he succeed. At this junction, he appeared to have rebelled against his father, the ruling Sultan Suleiman, for which he was executed in 1553. No doubt, Hurrem played a major role in Mustafa's downfall.

Although Hurrem succeeded in saving the throne for one of her sons, this time the bitterest rivalry between her two surviving sons, Selim and Bayezid, grew into an open battle in 1559 and culminated in Bayezid's seeking refuge in the Safavid court in Iran. After extensive negotiations between the Safavid Shah Tahmasb and Sultan Suleiman and the heir apparent prince Selim II (r. 1566–1574), the renegade prince Bayezid was captured and later executed by the Ottoman envoy who had arrived from Istanbul at the Safavid camp to carry out the order.

Such a cruel succession process could not endure long, and efforts were made to change it significantly. Instead of sending princes to rule distant provinces (as was the customary practice so that they may learn the craft of administration) where they amassed their own power base, either only one was sent or they were all kept in the capital. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the right of primogeniture was instituted and the princes ascended the throne according to their seniority. This adaptation was not without its drawbacks, but it curtailed the unpopular practice of fratricide considerably.

These issues are recorded in detail by the Ottoman historian and bureaucrat Mustafa Ali in his world history book, *Essence of History* (*Kunh ul-Ahbar*). The excerpt below is the section in which Mustafa Ali outlined the struggle between Selim and Bayezid in the late 1550s. A traumatic event at the center of Ottoman power compelled Mustafa Ali to write a separate volume titled *Rarity of Wars* (*Nadir ul-Meharib*), which was devoted entirely to this struggle. Because of the allegorical nature of the book, I have opted to use his *Essence of History* in my translation, which is based on two manuscript copies. The first is held in Nuruosmaniye Library (no. 3409), and the second is housed in the Library of Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish Historical Society) published in facsimile form (see bibliography for details).

TRANSLATION

Excerpts from Essence of History

I narrated the details of the war of princes in prose and poetry in my book titled *Nadir ul-Meharib* [*Rarity of Wars*]. I present in this book a summary of this

narrative as a requirement of writing history. In fact, Sultan Selim was governor in the district [*sanjak*] of Manisa and Sultan Bayezid was the one in the district of Kutahya. While they were passing days in peace with hunting parties and holding banquet parties, the land conquering sultan [Suleiman] wanted to change their seats of government. Selim was given [the district of] Konya and Bayezid was given [the district of] Amasya. Messengers with imperial letters were sent to both of them. [. . .], Bayezid resisted because he had been closer to the capital, whereas Selim submitted himself immediately as he received the imperial command. He arrived in Bursa step by step. As for Bayezid, he remained in Kutahya as if he was a snake impeding the way. Selim informed his father about a precaution against a possible start of quarrel [between brothers] within three days, if he was to move further from Bursa. However, the victorious sultan took measures against sedition and sent the third vizier, Mehmed Pasha, to Selim and the fourth vizier, Pertev Pasha, to Bayezid to counsel and warn the princes about moving toward their [respective] seats. The sultan reminded them that they should cling to the imperial command before breaking the bowl of honor and dignity. Although Selim had already submitted consciously himself [to the command], he sent an adviser lest Bayezid be suspicious about sending his viziers. Having received the instructions, [the viziers] left [Istanbul] and headed toward the princes' lofty seats. However, Bayezid made his enmity more apparent day by day and sent handkerchiefs to his brother together with reviling letters to invite him to fight openly, so he resorted to behaviors and manners that could not show courage. Being large hearted, Selim forwarded all the letters coming from his brother directly to the seat of his justice-disseminating father.

In this manner, Bayezid's inappropriate acts of disobedience showed its initial stages. His explicit wrongdoing and obstinacy concerning his withdrawal from comfort and tranquility by the desire of throne made itself apparent.

Therefore, the letters Bayezid wrote to Selim arrived altogether to the sultan. The sultan understood that Bayezid was lacking of discretion and devoid of competence for the throne as he intended to spark a grand sedition if he was to be neglected. He, therefore, sent [Bayezid] letters of warning and counsel. As Sultan Suleiman realized that nothing was useful, he decided to make an expedition by himself. He sent commands to the governor-generals [*beylerbeyi*]. In the year 965 [1558], he crossed to Uskudar; and for many days stayed there with the victorious army.

In addition, he sent commands to Selim, as well as to the governor-general of Anatolia Ahmed Pasha, the governor-general of Karaman Solak Ferhad Pasha, the governor-general of Dulqadir Ali Pasha, the governor of Adana Zubde-i Ali Ramazan and Piri Pasha [. . .] that they should head to the seat of prince [Selim] with their commanders and cavaliers, and that if the obstinate Bayezid intends to gather soldiers to challenge his brother they should turn off the light of his life. In this manner, many men gathered in the plains of Konya.

Obstinate Bayezid recruited a group of pests and troublemakers and headed toward Konya. In this manner, they came to the plains of Konya. On the side of Selim, the governor-general of Dulqadir Ali Pasha, who was previously *lala* [guardian] to [Selim], arrived to the side of his master.

Therefore, in addition to the military preparation of servants and *aghas* from both sides, especially Selim's emirs and cavalries prepared their men. First, the artillerymen hurried forth to the front, and each one threw himself into the battlefield. Second came the courageous sword girding men, also adept with the rifle, all excited to attack the adversaries. And third, the archers, central cavalry forces, volunteers, and auxiliaries fearlessly lined up in formation.

In this manner, the courageous men leaning on each other and the celebrated men being abundant with the intention of sacrificing heads and souls drew their swords or arrows. Selim endeavored to patronize them sumptuously. Being acquainted with the meaning of the verse "the day when wealth and sons avail not, save him who bringeth unto Allah a whole heart" (Q. 26:88–89), Selim and his man Lala Mustafa Pasha (who would later become the conqueror of Cyprus and Shirwan) warned the soldiers not to incline on chasing [the enemy] for booty. The commanders of the army too confirmed the order with obedience.

In this fashion, from sunrise to sunset a true battle took place on the battlefield, and from each side many brave men confirmed the point in the verse "a party will be in Paradise and a party in the Blaze." Then the arrival of evening allowed blood-spilling warriors to withdraw from fighting and postpone the fight until the next day.

That night, guards watched with caution; commanders and guards under the governor-generals never allowed anything unnoticed passed. [. . .] While the sun was setting, by the help of God, the opponent's downfall became certain. To the ears of men on Selim's side, the good news of "victory from Allah and an imminent conquest" (Q. 61:13) arrived. At the same time, the harbinger of "we have given you a clear conquest" [Q. 48:1] reached to the auspicious ears of Selim. From many sides, the voices of "so they defeated them by permission of Allah" [Q. 2:251] were heard. From the left side, the verifying news of "and victory is not but from Allah" rose up. The enemy troops chose to escape. Selim's courageous men flocked around the plunder like bees.

However, Bayezid seemingly escaped on the field of arrogance, and verified one by one the conditions explained by the verse, "on the Day a man will flee from his brother" [Q. 80:34]. He changed fighting with escape. He hardly escaped and withdrew toward Amasya. In fact, it has become manifest that rout and fleeing is equal to a thousand [severed] heads. He received his just rewards because of his actions. [His misconducts included], that first he rebelled against his father; and second drew sword against his noble brother, and third recruited all errant robbers whose evil actions stuck on him; fourth he burst into the city of Konya, the gathering place of the shrines of saints, and tainted its pure ground with unruly people.

This poor [soul] (that is, the author) heard from a person with piety and miracles called Kocek Molla, who had come from Syria to Konya to seek a place of retreat, that the verse “And thy Lord is not at all a tyrant to His slaves” became manifest in respect to Bayezid and his seditious men drawing swords during the Battle of Konya. [This person also] said that they were sentenced to death as part of their punishment for they deserved it because of rebellion and sedition.

Bayezid's Escape to the Safavid Shah

Bayezid “the obstinate” selling all that he had in the market of battle immediately headed toward his governorate. His son Orhan too joined him there. The remaining sword girding soldiers and the audacious men who enticed him to rebellion, among them Kuduz Ferhad, the lunatic of the ignoble, and Seyfeddin, the lame of the faithless, and Mestane the colonel all gathered together to come to Amasya with a thousand comrades, while sending countless letters of apology on behalf of [Bayezid]. They asked from the noble father pardon [for] the sins of the son. Guided by divine wisdom, none of these letters arrived at the threshold of the sultanate. Even the men whom he sent disappeared and never returned.

In short, the cause for this issue and the reason for such great sedition was Lala Mustafa Pasha. At his early career, he was in the service of Beyazid. The late Rustem Pasha did not like him because of his being one of the associates of Vizier Ahmed Pasha [who was a rival for Rustem Pasha]. Therefore, while Mustafa was the junior master of the stables, [Rustem Pasha] victimized him and offered him the post of chief-taster, then sent him to the governorate of Safed. Meanwhile, around the year 963 [1555], he decided to appoint him to the service of Selim in order to have Selim know of Bayezid's doings. While he was on his way from Safed to Manisa [that is, the seat of Selim], in order to deter him Bayezid demanded a servant (*lala*) for himself from the sultanate and sent letters reverently. Bayezid's demand was not approved as it was considered a cause of rebellion. When he reached Selim, he understood that [Selim] himself and all his nobles were in a banquet drinking and they were all oblivious about the passion of the sultanate. Then he began to give advice to Selim by saying that Rustem Pasha and all imperial household grandees were inclined to support Bayezid and if we [that is, Selim and Lala Mustafa Pasha] could show [Bayezid] as rebellious during the reign of his father, he [Selim] could ascend the throne and neither he could attain the sultanate nor the viziers could assist in the matter before the death of the father.

As Selim asked whether a solution existed for this, he replied: “The solution is easy . . . First send some letters and slowly kindle the blaze of rebellion.” Then, [Lala Mustafa] wrote a letter addressed to [Bayezid] where he mentioned Selim's preoccupation with banquets and drinking. The letter also advised Bayezid that it would be appropriate to set aside the rivalry for the throne by engaging in raids while Selim was still oblivious. He showed the letter to Selim and clandestinely sent a letter to Bayezid. He faithfully waited for the painful goal. [Bayezid] replied: “Help

me my *lala*, it is not difficult to raid from here and eliminate him.” Lala Mustafa sent another letter by saying: “Coming to battle is inappropriate, you should send some items from women’s clothes to invite Selim into open battle. Besides, banditry is not suitable for raiding and will ruin your glory. You had better engage in battle like a royal leader and attain the goal.” [Bayezid] then sent a woman’s handkerchief and headgear and invited Selim to fight him in open field. Thus, Lala [Mustafa Pasha] meanwhile in order to introduce sedition among them, had Selim send all letters and handkerchiefs to the sultan. In this way, he showed Bayezid as sinful, and Selim as humane and therefor qualified for support and protection.

When the sultan became aware of these, he sent letters of advice and warning to Bayezid, saying that he should end the enmity and hostility toward his brother in order to attain [his] goal. He even warned that if he wishes to receive good prayers of the sultan, he should never attempt to do these indecorous actions. These [advices] never hit the point. Bayezid the obstinate never took back what he had decided.

In fact, all the paths were taken. . . . They killed the sultan’s gatekeepers sent for Bayezid and took the letters and brought them to Selim’s servant [Lala Mustafa Pasha]. Lala would send letters to Bayezid informing him about Selim. He circulated the rumors that [Bayezid] killed the sultan’s men and burned the letters. He even surpassed the men renowned with tricks and manipulation, such as Rustem. Particularly, he had Selim write all the letters and made it known by the grand vizier that Bayezid was the instigator. As for the sultan who was cognizant of the princes’ differences and similarities, he used to believe all the news. In fact, being the grand vizier [Rustem Pasha] was accused of being on Bayezid’s side, whatever he transmitted as news about Selim and his servant it did not have any effect, and whatever measure he took did not fulfill its objective. Thus, [Lala Mustafa]’s golden ideas won. Then this affair resulted in Bayezid’s rebellion.

According to the account of Hamid Efendi who was Kadiasker (Military Judge) of Rumelia, once the rebellion of Bayezid was related to the sultan, he said, “I have sent many letters saying his repentance will be accepted before and after the battle and he will not be taken responsible and considering the responsibility of parenthood, I begged [him] many times; he never listened [to the contents of] my letters and obeyed my counsels and warnings. Besides, he killed all the men I sent to him.” Because Bayezid did not know that the letters and the men carrying letters were lost on the way, Bayezid was not free from torment.

The fact was that aforementioned Mustafa Pasha did not attain his objective. He was not given the post of grand vizierate as Selim had promised him in return for this service. Because he caused the murder of a member of this dynasty and he was found too ambitious, he became deprived of the post of grand vizierate because of the individuals filling the position. Although he achieved many conquests during the expedition to Iran [in 1578–79] that should have brought the seal of vizierate, instead, Sinan Pasha, an inferior to him, was accorded with the seal of vizierate. Being inflicted with incurable affliction because of this disloyalty, he died.

In short, Bayezid arrived in Amasya. He realized that neither he nor his men could remain within the Ottoman territories. Taking his four sons and a thousand men, he said farewell to the people of his governorate. Leaving his women behind, he headed toward Iran.

The Governor-General of Rumelia Temerrud Ali Pasha was at that time hiding in the castle of Sivas in order to watch highway robbers. He received the imperial command saying that if that rebel intended to pass by, he should not allow him to go through. However, instead, the Governor of Malatya, Mustafa Pasha and the Governor of Ayntab, Husrev Pasha showed courage and chased him to a place called Saatcukuru. They harassed him either by skirmish or plundering. Ultimately, they encountered Bayezid's troops at Saatcukuru and during the battle many were killed and wounded. Being defeated, [Bayezid] withdrew. But Governor-General of Erzurum Ayas Pasha did not obey the command of the world-conquering sultan. Not to mention that he did not exert effort to prevent him from escaping to the Persian Shah's lands, he also provided all necessary horseshoes and nails as demanded [from Bayezid]. For this [offense], Selim killed this governor-general by the command of the sultan. After this traitor was killed, the governor of Malatya Mustafa Pasha who showed great courage to serve the victorious prince [that is, Selim] was appointed in his place. In addition, his associate Husrev Pasha was appointed to the governorate of Pasin.

Bayezid the obstinate together with 12,000 men withdrew from the lands of Rum [that is, Anadolu] and passed to the lands of Persia. Shahquli Sultan, the shah's governor there, welcomed him with respect and kindness. He told [Bayezid] that Shah Tahmasb was busy with chasing his enemy at Astarabad though he knew personally of the prince's arrival; and [Bayezid] had to stay here until the news from the shah arrived.

Prince Selim informed the sultan on all happenings. In accordance with the imperial command, Selim and vizier Mehmed Pasha, together with the men under his command and the governor of Adana Ramazanoglu Piri Pasha, withdrew to Aleppo, the honorable city of the Arab lands. After wintering in Aleppo, Selim returned to his seat at Konya, Vizier Mehmed Pasha to the lofty threshold [that is, the capital, Istanbul], and all other governors to their own places.

After this, the grand vizier and the royal son-in-law Rustem Pasha, who had admirable skills in administration and experienced wisdom, was inclined toward the candidacy of Bayezid and hesitant about the candidacy of Selim. As he knew that Lala Mustafa Pasha himself caused the rebellion of Bayezid and he managed everything while Selim was busy with banquets and drinking, he wanted to appoint [Lala Mustafa Pasha] as governor of Pojega (a place near Bosna in the province of Buda/Hungary) in order to remove his possible vizierate. He planned to finish up his affair after distancing him from Selim. However, Lala Mustafa Pasha objected to this appointment with the excuse that he was the acting adviser and servant to the prince. He had Selim send many letters of recommendation to the sultan, and had many influential men to intercede to the sultan and the grand vizier.

This time, he was appointed as governor-general of Timisoara, again in Rumelia. But another letter arrived from Selim, conveying that Lala Mustafa Pasha's service was even more necessary from this time onward as he would arrange the release of Bayezid from the *Qizilbash* lands (that is, Iran), and demanded that he would be appointed as governor-general of Van (a border province with Iran). This request was accepted, and Lala Mustafa Pasha was appointed to Van, and in his place as *lala* [prince's adviser and servant], the governor of Pojega Tutunsuz, Huseyin Pasha was appointed.

Negotiations with Tahmasb

Prince Bayezid waited for the arrival of news for Shah Tahmasb. The shah told the aforementioned Shahquli Sultan in a letter that Bayezid could come to him with only a few soldiers. Probably he feared from the incursion of Bayezid with a couple of thousands of soldiers. He also told his entourage that this was a recompense for the renegade Alqas Mirza who had done the reverse [that is, rebelled against the Shah years earlier]. Then, without delay, he left Astarabad and went to his capital city, Qazvin. He sent his viziers with some soldiers to welcome Bayezid. As the two groups of soldiers met, they displayed to each other their military skills and deftness. Having seen their superiority, some of the courageous soldiers among the men of Bayezid demanded permission to attack on the *Qizilbash*. They were sure that if they had permission they could even cut the shah's head and loot the capital and its vicinity. However, this was not actually possible or easy. In other words, all the subjects [*Qizilbash*] were the followers of a different religious sect [Shi'ism] and they would fight together with all their children and adults. This time all subjects were heretical believers on the point that they would kill all the Sunnis.

Finally, on 23 Safer 967 [November 24, 1559], they met. They embraced each other like father and son. Moreover, as they enter the shah's palace, decorated carpets furnished the floor. Then thirty golden and silver trays full of gold and pearls were scattered for the joy of the arrival of Prince Bayezid. Many displays, free of malevolence, showed respect and happiness [toward the prince]. When they sat, they exchanged the offers of love and sincerity.

After five days, the prince invited the shah to his encampment in order to reciprocate the shah's benevolence with gifts and offerings. As the shah arrived, Bayezid offered him sumptuous presents including small bounties and fine flowered silk clothes, silver and gold sacs and baizes, and Anatolian clothes with pearls and gems. He also presented a decorated sword and a jeweled dagger. They sat down in the pavilion provided by Shah Tahmasb.

A few days passed by in this manner. Then Tahmasb decided to offer another banquet. After welcoming [ceremonies], various kinds of carpets on the floor; 300 sacs of countless coins, many long shining and gold-gilded clothes and tools ordered in twelve layers and robes of honor were given to all of [Bayezid's] nobles,

commanders, and soldiers, and they were served a delicious feast. Following the feast, Tahmasb did something strange in order to remove his fear. He said, "It seems that your comrades have become exhausted because of your painful travel. It is appropriate that with your permission, all your men except for your servants could become guests to our governors and chieftains so that they could rest and their necessities could be met." Therefore, he sent all of them to the villages around. The prince acceded to this request by the fear of losing everything.

However, the sultan learned of the agreement between the shah and the prince. Mahmud Beg, one of the palace servants, and Turak Agha, the master of stable of Selim, were sent to the shah's palace and presented letters. As a symbol of ancient royalty, silver coins were scattered on the letters and then the covers were opened with perfect reverence. A black scribe read out loud the letters. As the Qizilbash understood the content of the letters, Tahmasb responded.

Meanwhile Tahmasb demanded soldiers from [Bayezid] by saying, "I ask your help to go against Astarabad where we left previously for your honor." A number of men who had become miserable on the [Safavid] border and who were least useful in the princely service were sent. Even a man called Arab Mehmed, who was the gatekeeper of the black servants, was assigned as their leader. As they conquered the castles, they delivered them to the Qizilbash. When the important conquests were achieved, they arrived in Qazvin. As a means of thanking them, Tahmasb offered a banquet to the prince. Although externally he showed perfect congeniality, internally he carried the intent to deliver him to the sultan.

In order to execute his plan, he invited Bayezid to his palace. He gathered some fifteen strong warriors in the middle of a room. The prince entered the palace and passed through the men by saluting them. Just before he entered into the shah's private chamber, he fell into the claws of merciless predatory birds. In this manner, he was captured at a time between two prayers in the middle of Jumada I of the year [9]67 (February 8–17, 1560). Then Tahmasb's men in the palace took him. In addition, while the owners of the houses were warned, [Bayezid's] miserable men who remained in Qazvin were also taken. Those who only accompanied him were saved. but those who resisted were killed. Besides, his sons were also captured, and each one of them was assigned to a vizier who would take care of their protection. All of their arms and treasury full of gold and silver coins were confiscated.

Bayezid was told that Tahmasb had sent letters to his father through envoys. In those letters these were stated: "Bayezid regrets all mistakes he has committed so far. As part of his good intention and sincerity in repentance, he delivered us all unruly men who caused the sedition and we executed them. In addition, he agreed to go into prison in order to remove the possibility of rebellion." The prince was told that, "In fact, you agreed to none of these conditions, but because the outcome would serve for your advantage, we have taken these measures and in order to fulfill our promise, we killed some of your servants and imprisoned you." They made Bayezid cry out loud. After this, two envoys named Fartut and Arshadi secretly arrived in the sultan's threshold and the seat of [Selim] and the content of these letters were

delivered. The shah interceded on behalf of [Bayezid] to ask pardon from the sultan and to keep peaceful relations.

Understanding the [main purpose of] of the letter's content was realized. The sultan sent the chiefs of gatekeepers Hasan Agha and Ali Pasha (who was previously servant of Selim), and Selim sent his chief of gatekeepers Mahmud Agha as envoys to the shah. They were told that everything should be stated just orally. As they arrived in Qazvin, they were taken to the shah's presence with all respect and reverence. The sealed letters of the sultan were read out loud. The sultan's scribes penned a text demanding the extradition of the princes as they remained between fear and hope.

In accordance with the content of this letter, the shah agreed to deliver them but in order to secure more gifts and grants added another condition. He said to the envoys that, "When Bayezid came to my territory we made a deal by writing that if the sultan demanded me to deliver him, I would not extradite him. We stayed firm on this deal, so that it is impossible to deliver him to you. However, if the prince's brother, Selim, initiates a request for this matter [in writing?], there is no impediment to proceed in his extradition." In this manner a trick was done to some degree.

Then in order to receive good news this time, Selim sent his servant named Besaret [lit., good news]. Selim's envoy discussed the terms of agreement and even negotiated a few days more on the peace between the Ottomans and the Safavids, as he being the representative of the heir-apparent to the Ottoman throne. With God's benevolence, at that time, Selim was transferred to Kutahya and his son Murad, who was governor of Aksehir, was transferred to Manisa on his father's place. On early Rajab 960 [March 7–16, 1562], Selim's envoy Besaret Agha returned with good news. After reading the shah's letter, everything was done accordingly. As the objective was [the prince's] deliverance, everything was to be accepted to achieve this objective.

Then the sultan sent the governor-general of Van Husrev Pasha and Selim sent the commander Ali Agha who was eloquent, and they left with letters, which stated that [Tahmasb] should deliver Bayezid and his sons to these men. As the envoys arrived in Qazvin, their objectives were fulfilled when they met with the shah. On 15 Muharram 969 (sic. 970) [September 14, 1562] the prince and his sons were executed and their dead bodies were shown on the gate for a week. When the envoy Sinan Agha [sic. Ali Agha] was asked whether he could recognize Bayezid, he responded "I spent a long time in his service and devoted myself to his cause, I know him and recognized him immediately." Therefore, a possible mischief by changing Bayezid with someone else was avoided. Then, Bayezid was delivered to Selim's chief officer Ali Agha and he was told that he should submit to the command of the sultan. After his execution, he was put on an old cloth on his back and a rough cap on his head and an inexpensive belt on his waist. Taking into consideration the fact that he committed defamation of the Ottoman dynasty, he was accorded an ungenerous funeral procession. In short he was executed by strangulation. His sons were also executed.

The Qizilbash cried a lot, as Shah Tahmasb and the people of Qazvin mourned. They threw stones to the place where the envoys passed. Then, the dead bodies were cleaned quickly and transferred to the Ottoman lands in accordance with the imperial decree. They were buried in Sivas. The envoy immediately went to Selim's seat [of power] and conveyed the news. Then as part of the agreement, the sultan sent 300,000 *filori* [gold coins] and Selim sent 100,000 *filori* and many gifts and presents of precious stones [to the shah]. The fourth vizier Pertev Pasha oversaw their transfer until Kazabad, and from there onward to the governor of Karahisar-i Sarki, Ilyas Beg and aforementioned Mahmud Agha from the service of Selim carried these treasures to Qazvin.

NOTES

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III. The Way of Tradition and the Path of Innovation

AURANGZEB AND DARA SHUKUH'S STRUGGLE FOR THE MUGHAL THRONE

JANE MIKKELSON

Every succession in the Mughal dynasty was a tensely anticipated event, a time of contestation and uncertainty that frequently erupted into violence and chaos.¹ As Timurids, the Mughals were inheritors of the difficulties attending the Central Asian tradition of collective sovereignty: in lieu of primogeniture (the automatic transfer of imperial power to the eldest son), the corporate dynastic structure and appanage practice (distribution of land and power among several members of the ruling family) central to the Timurid political system ensured that no succession had a predictable outcome. Princes plotted against each other, often long before the end of their father's reign, and each was supported by various factions and women in the royal family who, as you shall see, played a decisive if not always visible role.²

The war of succession between the four sons of Shahjahan (r. 1628–1658)—princes Dara Shukuh (d.1659), Shah Shuja', Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), and Murad Bakhsh—was no different. When Shahjahan's health began to fail in 1658, all four sons began to maneuver against each other. After several battles, imprisonments, defections, pardons, hot pursuits, and continuously shifting alliances—all within the span of one year—Aurangzeb finally emerged as the uncontested victor in 1659 and had all rival claimants eliminated.³

Aurangzeb's long reign (lasting until his death in 1707) was defined by what some scholars have described as ineffective management of mounting pressures and crises—decentralization, rebellions, economic and financial problems, and a long, costly campaign in the Deccan. Others scholars have described his reign as marked by a broad policy of religious intolerance:⁴ Hindu temples were destroyed

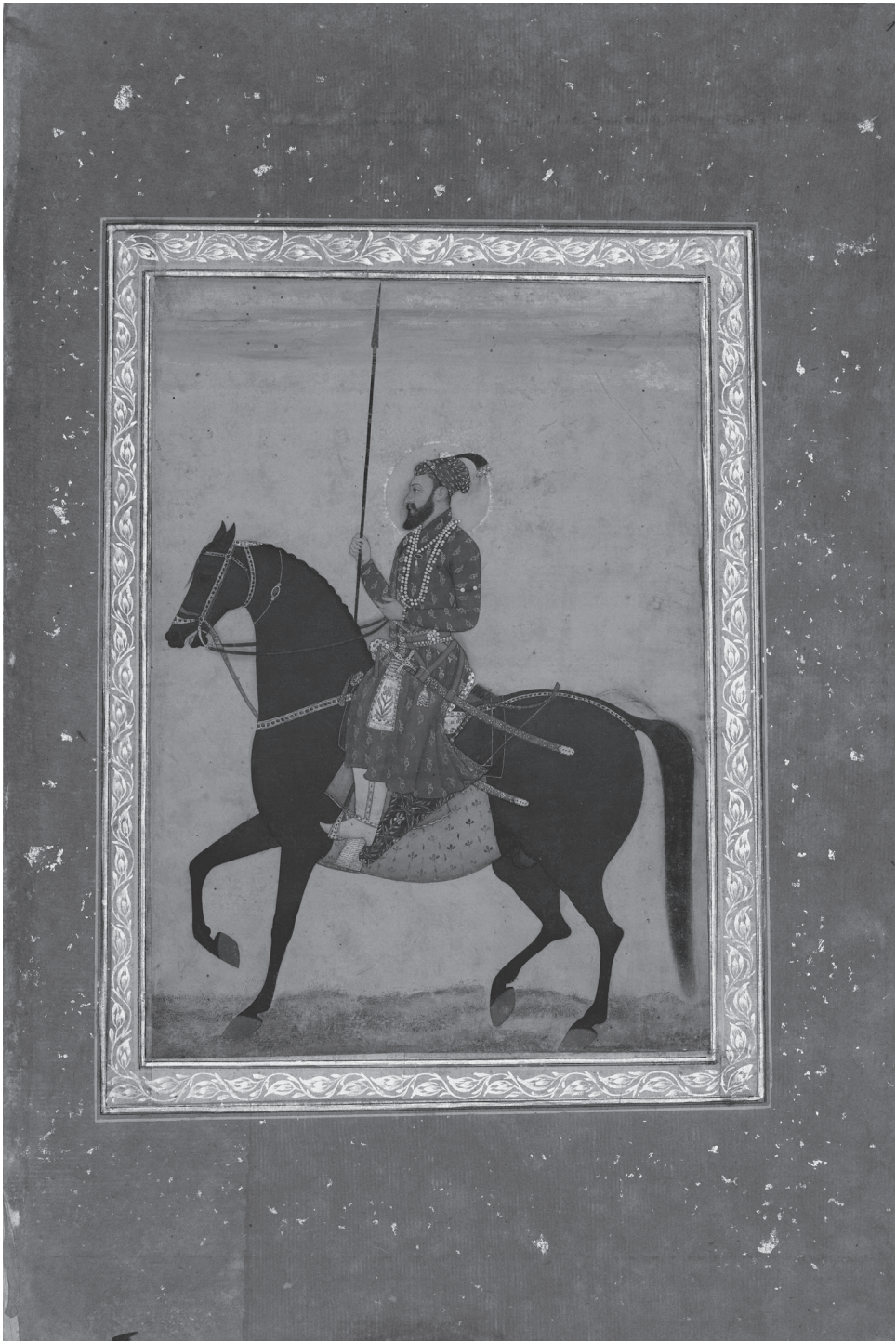


FIGURE 5.3 Equestrian portrait of Aurangzeb

Date: Seventeenth century

Place of origin: Attributed to India

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1925. 25.138.1

and mosques erected over them; the *jizya* (a poll tax on non-Muslims) was reintroduced; many Hindus were dismissed from government service; and imperial ideology was remolded into a more narrow shari‘a-minded orientation.⁵ Aurangzeb is considered to be the last of the “great Mughals,” his rule decisively swerving away from a putative golden age that perhaps reached its zenith with Akbar’s policy of *sulh-I kull*, or “tolerance for all.”⁶

As with most decline-and-fall accounts, the narrative form itself makes it all too easy to find a villain, a single person whose conscious choices are made to explain a vast and complex set of processes constituting an overall decline. In many accounts of Mughal history, Aurangzeb has been cast in this role; indeed, his very personality has been judged to be the ultimate reason for the decline of the Mughal Empire: Sir Jadunath Sarkar, for instance, damns him with the faintest praise of being better suited to be “a successful general, minister, theologian, or school-master, and an ideal departmental head” rather than an emperor.⁷

This kind of historical narrative operates on the logic of contrasts. Although all four princes were involved in the war of succession, in the end, it all came down to a struggle between Aurangzeb and Dara Shukuh, and their conflict was as much a battle of ideologies as a clash of swords. Dara Shukuh, the eldest son and heir-apparent, had long been favored by Shahjahan. If Aurangzeb’s vision of religion and state has been seen as a conscious return to tradition and orthodoxy, Dara Shukuh’s innovative approach to religion has been described as the opposite. Annemarie Schimmel’s characterization of Dara Shukuh and Aurangzeb is representative of the convenient binary formed by these two figures:

[Dara Shukuh and Aurangzeb] manifested in themselves the two possibilities of Indian Islam: Aurangzeb certainly gained the love of those Muslims more oriented to the shari‘a, with their attention centered on Mecca and a distinct Muslim identity; he was equally disliked by mystically minded Muslims and most Hindus. Dara Shukuh, on the contrary, has been considered truly Indian in spirit.⁸

Dara Shukuh, who was also a Qadiri Sufi, scholar, and poet, undertook several projects that we might today call studies in comparative religion. His scholarly works, such as *Majma‘ al-Bahrayn* and *Sirr-i Akbar*, are rigorous, creative engagements with both Indic and Islamic religious thought, the aim being to bring these two monotheistic traditions into alignment.⁹ He was fond of quoting the following couplet by Sana‘i (d. c. 1130), highlighting the merely specious differences between Islam and infidelity:

Kufr u islam har du dar rah-at puyan
“Wahda-hu la sharika la-hu” guyan

Both infidelity [*kufr*] and Islam travel along your [God’s] road,
 Saying: “He is alone, He has no partner.”¹⁰

The destinies of these two princes mark a fork in the road of any monolinear historical account of Mughal history; as any such crossroads, it begs the tantalizing counterfactual question of how the subsequent course of history might have unfolded on the path not taken, that is, had Dara Shukuh succeeded to the throne instead of Aurangzeb. But such narratives and caricatures often purchase their explanations at the price of context and detail. Was Aurangzeb only a jealous, narrow-minded bigot? Was Dara Shukuh really a guileless scholar and Sufi with no political ambition? How can these clichéd antitheses be confirmed or dispelled?¹¹

Close reading can add crucial texture to these otherwise crude portrayals: by analyzing original sources with particular attention to style and rhetoric, many finer points can be gleaned that address the far more interesting question of how certain contrasting portraits and narratives may have been constructed by the very historical figures in question. How did Aurangzeb view Dara Shukuh? In Jahanara's mind, in what ways were her two brothers different? How did Dara Shukuh and Aurangzeb conceive of themselves? All three siblings were clearly very canny verbal tacticians: for them, the strategic arrangement of words on a page was just as much a part of the apparatus of war as the arraying of forces on a battlefield, and all four selections provided here are examples of a highly charged, politically inflected rhetoric where every word matters.

With this in mind, the present translations make no attempt to abbreviate long sentences or delete repetitions. Doing so would risk undermining the structure of Indo-Persian prose thought, wherein complexity of style was not mere mechanical conformity to convention; on the contrary, every seemingly redundant adjective and phrase was carefully positioned by the author within the work's overall rhetorical architecture. The resulting verbose, at times euphuistic English is therefore intended to convey as much of the original form and meaning as possible.¹²

(1) Jahanara's letter to Aurangzeb is an eleventh-hour attempt to dissuade him from engaging in battle with Dara Shukuh.¹³ She herself shared Dara Shukuh's religio-political leanings and is writing very much as Dara Shukuh's ally. Citing the strict Islamic injunction not to wage war during the sacred month of Ramazan, she strongly exhorts Aurangzeb to stay true to his own pious nature and not violate this law. She also refers to the convention that one must obey an elder brother (Dara Shukuh) as one would obey a father—a further implication that Aurangzeb's actions are not simply unseemly but flout basic social conventions. Her wording is delicate, at times even laudatory, and she stops just shy of accusing Aurangzeb outright of being a bad Muslim. By construing Aurangzeb's (potential) actions as rebellious and seditious, and by appealing to what she calls his fundamentally just and pious nature, Jahanara draws a line on the moral battleground, raising specific issues that later historians would have to spin with considerable delicacy in official histories.

(2) The excerpt from Muhammad Saqi Musta'idd Khan's history, the *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri* (completed in 1710), provides an official version of the events of exactly

one year (from September 1658 through September 1659). As such, it is unsurprisingly packed with fawning praise of Aurangzeb, in which his coming to power is portrayed as a divinely sanctioned blessing. How this is achieved is quite impressive: Aurangzeb is described with relentlessly bombastic diction as an infinitely wise, just, pious, and clement ruler, whose highest ambition is to rid Hindustan of heresy. Dara Shukuh, by contrast, is presented as a malignant apostate, a perverter of true Islam. This history handles certain unpleasant events by clinging assiduously to a narrative of inevitability: deciding to fight (unlawfully) during Ramazan is cast as a decision that Aurangzeb was forced to make with a heavy heart, and only when all other options for peaceful outcomes were exhausted. A certain amount of squeamishness is felt, for example, in the haste with which this otherwise voluble historian describes the execution of Dara Shukuh in a terse passive voice, then immediately launches into a detailed account of Aurangzeb's many acts of generosity during that time.

(3) Aurangzeb's letter to his son was composed long after the events of 1658–59, toward the end of his reign. He reflects upon that war of succession as a much older man, and his recollections are colored by the pressing concerns of the present, and by his increasing fear that yet another war of succession would break out among his sons. In this letter, he mentions Dara Shukuh, who, as he says, also had a rightful claim to the throne—which he lost on account of his greed and filial disobedience. Aurangzeb's letters offer a stunningly personal self-portrait of a ruler whose orthodox piety is certainly evident: in one letter, he chastises one of his sons for celebrating Nouruz (a pre-Islamic Persian new year festivity), referring to this custom of “the people of Iran, demons of the desert” (*mardum-i irani ghul-i biyabani*) as a (bad) innovation (*bid'at*; that is, as something without precedent in the Islamic tradition).¹⁴ But he also contemplates quite self-reflectively, and often elegiacally, his legacy and the future of his empire. Aurangzeb's correspondence reveals that he was not afraid to get his hands dirty in the mundane affairs of governance and that he had an extraordinary degree of personal involvement in routine bureaucratic matters (ensuring the appointment of qualified persons to various posts and so forth). Frequent citations of classical Persian poets such as Sa'di, 'Attar, and others calls into question the stereotypical image of him as an ill-humored, austere reviler of poetry. Some letters contain nuanced, invaluable meditations on abstract matters, such as the nature of kingship (*badshahi*)¹⁵—leaving little doubt that he took the duties of his office very seriously.

(4) Dara Shukuh's lyric poems (*ghazals*) are undeniably polemical. In one ghazal, his bragadoccio claims about the high order of both his spiritual and political achievements blend together seamlessly:

Having beheld you [God] in entirety [*dar kull*]

Qadiri¹⁶ concluded universal peace [*sulh-i kull*],¹⁷ abandoning rebellion [*'inad*].¹⁸

In another poem, he does this with still more daring bluntness:

That Muhammad [the Prophet] was king of messengers [*shah-i rasulan bud*];
This Muhammad [Dara Shukuh] would be king of kings [*buvad shah-i shahan*].¹⁹

The undisguised political ambitions evident in these poems remind us that the picture of Dara Shukuh as an apolitical pacifist whose attention was confined to academic and theological pursuits needs to be taken with a sizable grain of salt.²⁰

In translating these ghazals, no attempt was made to render them into poetic English because the aim has been to show as literally as possible how Dara Shukuh made use of certain central terms (such as *haqq* [truth/God/the real],²¹ and *kufr* and *islam* [infidelity and Islam]). Perhaps this is not a great loss; although his poetry is very interesting in terms of revealing his political, religious, and ideological sensibilities, he cannot be said to figure among the great lyric poets of his time.

TRANSLATION

Letter to Aurangzeb from Jahanara, His Sister

Praise be to God and his bounty that the holy body of the Emperor [*zat-i muqaddas-i shahinshah*]—the Seeker of Justice [*ma'dilat-puzhuh*] and Discerner of Details, His Most Exalted Majesty [*a'la hazrat*], Shadow of God, Object of Our Lord's Merciful Gaze, Second Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction [*sahib-qiran-i sani*; that is, Shahjahan²²]—is unencumbered by the many infirmities and illnesses that necessarily attend the human condition. [Shahjahan's] world-adorning attention is fully directed toward ensuring the welfare of [his] subjects—both nobles and commoners alike—who have been entrusted to his care by God, and toward the security of the kingdom. [Shahjahan's] most noble and equitable nature does not permit him to tolerate anyone—especially his fortunate children and renowned sons—fomenting such disturbances that lead to the distress of the populace and the harm and oppression of all peoples [*tava'if-i anam*].

Now that [Shahjahan's] sacred thoughts are wholly occupied with how best to repair such weaknesses that entered into the affairs of nobles and commoners on account of the illness that had afflicted that Chosen One of the People and the World [Shahjahan], stoking the flames of insurrection and rebellion [*fitna u fisad*] and igniting the fires of hatred and hostility [*kin u 'inad*], which (heaven forefend!) will kindle the desolation of countries and the ruination of worshippers, can only increase the distress of [Shahjahan's] blessed mind and cause great anguish to his holy nature. This undesirable display from that wise, enlightened brother

[that is, Aurangzeb], who is adorned with elegant virtues and generous conduct, and who possesses laudable manners and a sound disposition, would be extremely wicked and unbecoming.

It was necessary that this letter be composed with benevolent intentions, consisting in great benefits and motivating the cleansing and purifying of [one's] inner courtyard [conscience; *sahat-i batin*] and clearing the path of return [to Paradise; *tasfiya-yi tariq-i ma'ad*] of any weeds and debris of corrupt matters and reprehensible transgressions. If the intention of that noble brother that is, Aurangzeb] in this matter is to stir up the dust of revolt and rebellion [*fisad u 'inad*] and to stoke the fires of battle and slaughter, he might justly judge for himself how extremely distressing it is to prepare for war, conflict, battle, and slaughter to further [one's] ambition to "spill the blood"²³ of the innocent, and to fire arrows and muskets in the presence of His Majesty in opposition to the True Guide [*murshid*] and *Qibla* [that is, Shahjahan]—whose pleasure is tantamount to the pleasure of God (may He be exalted and glorified) and the Messenger (may God honor him and grant him peace). The fruits of such actions can be only infamy and ruin. Even if [your] preparations for the turmoil of mutual enmity and conflict are not provoked by the Fortunate Prince [*shahzada-yi buland-iqbal*²⁴; that is, Dara Shukuh], this still cannot be condoned by the principles of wisdom; for according to Islamic and conventional law alike, an elder brother has the judgment of a father [*hukm-i pidar darad*]. [Aurangzeb's action] are a certain and complete departure from all things that please the mind of His Holy Majesty, Shadow of God [Shahjahan] and the demands of his exalted imperial nature.

In sum, when that prudent and noble brother [Aurangzeb], who is credited with laudable deportment, virtuous manners, and a generous nature that is famous throughout the world, who ever endeavors to please the most noble mind of the fortunate Emperor and angelic King [Shahjahan], stirs up the dust of war, kindles the flames of conflict, prepares for battle and bloodshed, and decides to fight and foment rebellion—that is in no way agreeable to anybody. Is it wise to trade a few days' delay in this impermanent, unstable realm and [partaking of the various] enjoyments that bewitch the foolish [inhabitants] of this borrowed [temporal] world for perpetual damnation and infamy of the eternal world? Hemistich:

Don't do this, don't do this; those who are virtuous do not act thus.

It is suitable for that honorable brother [Aurangzeb] to deem it necessary to distance himself from these corrupt matters and reprehensible actions . . . and to strive to please the holy mind of the religion-fostering King and justice-spreading Emperor [Shahjahan] as much as possible. [Aurangzeb] ought to consider [striving to secure] the happiness of His Majesty [Shahjahan] as a way of attaining bliss in both realms [in the here and hereafter], and he must be wary of spilling the blood of the followers of the Seal of the Prophets [Muhammad; that is, the blood of Muslims] during the blessed month of Ramazan. He [Aurangzeb] ought to obey the laws [*ahkam*]

that are already obeyed by the people and that are given by the Guide and Lord of Beneficence, Master of Sultanate and Empire [Shahjahan]. For verily the meaning of the Qur'anic phrase "those among you who command"²⁵ is the king; whereas to start down the path of opposition to the caliph of God [*khilaf-i khalifa-yi ilahi*] is to oppose God.

Should you have any further objectives, it would be wise and agreeable for you to decide to halt in whatever place you have pitched your tents, and to write down all your demands so that they may be presented to His Holiness [Shahjahan] and handled in accordance with whatever you desire in your heart. Sincere efforts will be made to satisfy and fulfill the aims and desires of that apple of the eye of the sultanate and government [that is, Aurangzeb].

Excerpt from Muhammad Saqi Musta'idd Khan's Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri

On the eighth of Zu l-hijja of the year 1068 [September 6, 1658²⁶], the health of the Second Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction [*sahib-qiran-i sani*], the Emperor and Warrior of the Faith, Shahjahan—hereafter, His Most Exalted Majesty became afflicted with a sudden ailment in the capital [Delhi] and retired from the occupations of world-governance. Dara Shukuh, the eldest son of His Most Exalted Majesty, took advantage of this opportune moment and barred the arrival of news to the provinces. In this way, disorder made its way into the realm; Murad Bakhsh, the fourth son of His Most Exalted Majesty and governor of Gujarat, ascended the throne, and Shah Shuja', the second son of His Most Exalted Majesty, did the same in Bengal, leading his army toward Patna. Fearing the power of the fortune of the lord of the times [Aurangzeb], Dara Shukuh repeatedly attempted to divert the disposition of His Most Exalted Majesty away from this partaker in the good fortune of eternity [Aurangzeb], and, through divers deceptions, caused [Shahjahan] to recall back to court the armies that had been sent to assist the king [Aurangzeb] in guarding the provinces. After that, intending to eliminate Shuja' and Murad Bakhsh during His Most Exalted Majesty's lifetime and with his assistance, [Dara Shukuh] turned with composure to the matter of the Deccan and to sorting out the affairs of this divinely chosen one [Aurangzeb], and undertook to convey His Majesty to Akbarabad [Agra] during the very peak of his illness. . . . Through the subterfuges of Dara Shukuh, His Most Exalted Majesty experienced a change of heart regarding him who is fortunate in eternal matters [Aurangzeb]. [Shahjahan] imprisoned 'Isa Beg, [Aurangzeb's] government agent, who had not committed any crime, and ordered the seizure of his properties and possessions; after a while, however, comprehending the indecorous nature of this action, he released him from prison.

Of the various kinds of abominations perpetrated by Dara Shukuh, the greatest cause of the lord of Islam's [Aurangzeb's] wrath was Dara Shukuh's inclination toward the practices of the Hindus [*a'in-i hunud*] and his propagation of the style of taking liberties [with what is forbidden by Islamic law] and heresy [*tariqa-yi*

ibahat va ilhad]. For this reason, considering it imperative to preserve the laws of religion and state [*namus-i din va dawlat*], [Aurangzeb] resolved to set out and pay his respects to His Most Exalted Majesty and to convey Murad Bakhsh [to court as well], because, although he had perpetrated ignorant actions, he [had in the meantime] grasped the hem of royal benevolence, begging for [Aurangzeb's] intercession. . . . Heeding the demands of prudence, [Aurangzeb] assembled the accouterments of battle, and on the first day of Jumada l-ula of 1068 [February 4, 1658], he departed from Aurangabad in the direction of Burhanpur; on the twenty-fifth of this month [February 28, 1658], the shadow of [Aurangzeb's] arrival was cast upon the court of Burhanpur, and he dispatched a letter to His Most Exalted Majesty expressing [his desire to] visit [Shahjahan while he was ill]. For one month, there was no response; and all the while, dreadful news kept arriving, [such as that of] Jaswant Singh's defection [to Dara Shukuh's side] at the instigation of Dara Shukuh. On Saturday, the twenty-fifth of Jumada l-ukhra [March 29, 1658], [Aurangzeb] unfurled the banners of his attention toward the abode of the caliphate, Akbarabad [Agra], and on the twenty-first of Rajab [April 24, 1658], during the march from Dipalpur, Murad Bakhsh, who had come from Ahmadabad adorned in the attire of pilgrimage to circumambulate the Ka'ba of the state [to beg humbly for Aurangzeb's forgiveness], arrived to pay his respects. . . . [Dara Shukuh], whose religion is heresy [*an zalalat-kish*],²⁷ prepared for battle. . . .

Placing trust in God, the king arrayed
The victorious army to the right and to the left.

All the soldiers were determined and patient;
Everyone was of a single mind, placing their trust in God.

Jaswant Singh hoisted the banners of ignorance and misfortune, straightened the ranks, and mounted his horse in readiness for war; the two armies engaged in battle. Although the Hindu forces were as numerous as a host of heavy clouds, the fire-raining swords of the victorious warriors for religion [*mujahidan*] burned the harvest heap of those lives imprisoned by divine wrath [*ghazab-i ilahi*], and lethal arrows loosed by the brave men [of Aurangzeb's army] pierced their enemies' chests, repositories of their own misfortune that had become targets for the arrows of imperial anger [*qahr-i shahinshahi*]. In the end, Jaswant Singh chose to flee the scene of battle ignominiously with a number of his men, and they crept away in the direction of his homeland, Marwar.

The terrified, timorous ones fled in such haste
That they tore off their heavy sacred threads [*zunnar*]

. . . The beauty of victory was stunningly reflected in the mirror-like swords of the warriors for religion of the glorious army [of Aurangzeb]; all plundered

possessions were confiscated, and the imperial tally counted nearly 6,000 slain enemy soldiers.

While victory and defeat are the custom of the world,
Victory won't lend anyone a hand.

When [Aurangzeb] crossed the Chambal River on the first day of Ramazan [June 3, 1658], news of Dara Shukuh's advance from Dholpur reached [Aurangzeb's] royal ear. On the sixth day of the blessed month of Ramazan [June 8, 1658], [Aurangzeb] approached the army of [Dara Shukuh] and halted at a distance of one and a half *kuruh* [kos].²⁸ On that very day, Dara Shukuh mounted his horse and stood at some distance ahead of his camp; however, fearing the charisma and authority of the lord of the world [Aurangzeb; *farr-u-shan-i khadiv-i jahan*], he didn't have the courage to take a single step forward. He greatly tormented his own soldiers, who were girded for battle, by keeping them outside in the scorching air; a great many perished from severe heat and dehydration. . . . The next day, that fierce warrior [Aurangzeb] ordered that the banners of resolve be unfurled, and that his armies march in the direction of Akbarabad [Agra]. On the morning of the same day, the ninth of Ramazan [June 11, 1658] . . . cannons were shot and muskets were fired from both sides, and the heat of battle blazed. [. . . Several] chiefs of Dara Shukuh's army were slain by arrows, and although some of his troops were still with him, his resolve began to falter. He descended from his elephant and mounted a horse; seeing that ill-timed action, his army was thrown into disarray and began to flee, and the breezes of triumph swept through the tassels of [Aurangzeb's army's] victory-embroidered banners.

These two strange victories became joined this way:

*"Victory is from God and conquest is near"*²⁹

Many miraculous signs pointed to the good fortune of [Aurangzeb], who was distinguished by divine favor; for instance, so many commanders were killed on Dara Shukuh's side that in no battlefield anywhere was anything similar ever seen . . . whereas none of the great commanders of the victorious armies [of Aurangzeb] perished. . . . Following his defeat, Dara Shukuh arrived at his house of grief in [Agra] by the evening with his son and several of his servants, and when three watches of the night had passed, he departed for the house of the caliphate, Shahjahanabad [Delhi].

Borrowed fortune [*dawlat-i 'ariyat*] turned its face away from him;
All that the heavens had bestowed upon him was taken back.

. . . On that same day, [Aurangzeb] sent an apologetic letter to His Most Exalted Majesty [Shahjahan] expressing regret for the occurrence of the battle. On the tenth

day of the blessed month of Ramazan [June 12, 1658], the Nur-Manzil garden in Akbarabad [Agra] was graced with [Aurangzeb's] royal presence; His Most Exalted Majesty [Shahjahan] sent a reply to Aurangzeb's letter of apology, and on the following day, he sent [Aurangzeb] a sword that was called "the world-conqueror" [*'alamgir*]. High-ranking nobles and other courtiers of the caliphate turned their hopeful faces toward the royal court of the protector of the world [Aurangzeb], arriving there in legions; everyone was distinguished by favors according to their station. . . . On the twenty-first [June 23, 1658], it came to be known that Dara Shukuh had reached Delhi on the fourteenth of Ramazan [June 16, 1658]. Despite the fact that [Aurangzeb's] royal wish to attend upon His Most Exalted Majesty had been presented,³⁰ Dara Shukuh had cast His Majesty's mind into doubt by means of secret written communications. Lord [Aurangzeb], a keen discerner of subtleties, abandoned that intention; on the twenty-second of Ramazan [June 24, 1658] he made his way toward [Delhi]. On the twenty-fourth [June 26, 1658], at Ghatsami, news arrived of Dara Shukuh's flight from Delhi, and on the last day of [Ramazan, June 30, 1658], [Aurangzeb] appointed Bahadur Khan to pursue Dara Shukuh. Because Murad Bakhsh had prepared for unjust rebellion and, his head full of illusions, was waiting for any opportunity to display his spite, it was necessary for Aurangzeb to take him prisoner at Mathura on the second of Shavval [July 3, 1658], freeing the people from evil and sedition. . . . When it became known that Dara Shukuh was heading toward Lahore, the kingdom-conquering lord [Aurangzeb] decided to advance on Panjab.

Astrologers had selected a favorable hour on the blessed day of Friday, the first of the month of Zu l-qa'da 1068 [August 1, 1658] . . . for [Aurangzeb's] auspicious accession to the throne; yet because there had been no opportunity to arrive at [Delhi] Fort, . . . [Aurangzeb] remained at the garden of Agharabad [Shalamar] for a few days, where he acceded to the throne of fortune at the aforementioned hour. On that blessed day, princes, high-ranking nobles, persons of rank, and others acquired such honors as defy the imagination. Men of letters found marvelous chronograms for this accession, and among them is the magnificent Qur'anic verse: "Obey God and obey the messenger and those in authority among you."³¹ . . .

At that time, Aurangzeb heard that Shah Shuja', [Aurangzeb's] brother—between whom, prior to his prosperity-granting accession, there had been perfect concord and close friendship—emerged from Bengal intent on war. Therefore, on the twelfth of Muharram [October 9, 1658], the banners of return from Multan were unfurled, and on the fourteenth of Rabi' al-avval [December 9, 1658], the [Delhi] Fort was illuminated by the charismatic magnificence [*farr*] of the [emperor's] arrival. News of Shah Shuja's seditious stirrings arrived apace. Although it was the wish of [Aurangzeb's] most enlightened heart to disregard [Shah Shuja's] connivances, [Shah Shuja'] had the temerity to reach the borders of Banaras [Varanasi], clamoring for battle; so it was with disappointment that Aurangzeb ordered Prince Muhammad Sultan to unfurl the banners of departure from Akbarabad [Agra] in

that direction on the eighteenth of Rabi' al-avval [December 13, 1658]. . . . The lord of the world [Aurangzeb] wanted to reach a peaceful resolution in the matter of Shah Shuja', so he sent a divine missive consisting of various kinds of advice in order to clarify his [Shah Shuja's] intentions. However, once he had ascertained that peace and civility would be of no avail, on the fifth of [Rabi' al-avval, November 30, 1658], he [Aurangzeb] hoisted the banners opposition. . . .

Dara Shukuh was compelled to prepare for battle; but because he lacked the courage to confront [Aurangzeb's] imperial forces, he dug trenches along the passes of the hills of Ajmer. . . . The next day, [Aurangzeb's] victorious forces advanced half a *kuruh* [kos] and halted; a beam of sunshine shone forth from [Aurangzeb's] royal quarters, indicating that the artillery be carried forward . . .

Cannons and muskets blazed on both sides,
The field of battle was obscured by fire.

. . . Among the warriors of the faith of [Aurangzeb's] army, Shaykh Mir, the best among pious nobles, was struck in the chest by musket-fire and became martyred. . . . Beholding the brave displays of [Aurangzeb's] victorious army, Dara Shukuh decided to flee for Gujarat, even though his trenches were holding. In this way victory was achieved, an ornament for religion and state [*piraya-yi mulk u millat*]. Upon hearing the good news of this divinely bestowed conquest, His Highness the Emperor [Aurangzeb] gave thanks to the true granter of victory [God].

It is an undisputed fact that very few territory-conquering kings [*padishahan-i kishvar-sitan*] have been obliged to fight for the royal throne and authority in this way, during so brief a span of time. This victory-granting king [Aurangzeb] was forced to battle many powerful enemies within a single year. With divine support [*ta'yidat-i rabbani*], he emerged victorious and triumphant, attaining sovereignty [*sarvari*] and snatching the highest reed of excellence³² in every battle by the power of his victorious arm and decapitating sword. Despite such displays of courage, extreme humility prevented him from ever attributing [his victories] to his own powers. . . . He always displayed gratitude for these fortunate blessings by his devotion to God, through his propagation of Islamic law [that was given by] His Excellency, the Refuge of Prophethood [Muhammad], and by the eradication of all traces of innovation and sin [*bidat' va manahi*]. The abundance of splendor and magnificence notwithstanding, [Aurangzeb's] piety did not permit him to give any part of himself over to the negligence of rest; with abiding wisdom, piety, justice, and solicitous concern for the conditions of the army and his subjects and the laws of justice and equality, he endowed the caliphate with resplendence. I hope that the realm of form and meaning may always be illuminated by the sovereign rule of this religion-protecting lord [*farman-dihi-yi in khadiv-i din-parvar*]. . . .

Because the first celebration of [Aurangzeb's first] auspicious coronation had been cut short, and . . . [many formalities] had been postponed, therefore, when matters of world-conquest were settled, an order was issued to regional governors to make all necessary preparations for these festivities. The organizers put forth every effort in decorating the assembly of pleasure, and on the auspicious day of Sunday, the twenty-fourth of the blessed month of Ramazan of 1069 [June 15, 1659] . . . the emperor, whose throne was the celestial globe and whose crown was the sun, the world-conquering, justice-nurturing king placed the miracle-working crown of world-governance upon his head, donned the auspicious investiture of success, and ascended the throne of magnificence and glory.

From the east of the imperial throne
 Rays of light from the Shadow of God illuminated the world;
 The new emperor made the world anew
 The soul of the kingdom's body was renewed again
 The dawn of the fortune [*dawlat*] broke upon the dark night of Hindustan,
 And the sun shone into every corner.

. . . So many trays of silver and gold were distributed in the exalted name of the religion-nurturing king [*khaqan-i din-parvar*] that [everyone's] wide purse of hope was filled by collecting that scattered treasure. Everyone standing along the carpet of honor politely placed their hands upon their heads as a sign of fidelity, and uttered prayers and praises of the caliph of the time [*khalifa-yi zaman*]. The doors to the treasuries of imperial rewards were opened for the people of the world, and colorful robes of honor adorned the eager figures of young and old alike.

Since in previous times the Word of Purity³³ had been stamped upon ashrafis [gold coins] and rupees, and this coinage had become eroded by being passed constantly from hand to hand, [Aurangzeb] decreed that it would be better if a different credo were stamped on [his] coins. At that time, Mir 'Abdulbaqi, whose pen-name was Sahba'i, presented his own couplet:

King Aurangzeb, conqueror of the world,
 Minted a [new kind of] coin in the world like the bright full moon.

This so pleased [Aurangzeb's] most holy temperament that he ordered one side of ashrafis and rupees to be stamped with this pleasing couplet, the other side bearing the name of the city in which the coins were minted and the year of accession of elegance and beauty [*zib-u-zinat*; that is, Aurangzeb]. [Aurangzeb's] auspicious title adorned the illustrious imperial seal: "Abu z-zafar Muhyi al-din Muhammad Aurangzeb Bahadur 'Alamgir Padishah-i Ghazi," and it was ordered that royal mandates bearing the glad tidings of security and tranquility [brought about by

Aurangzeb's accession be distributed to all provinces of the empire. Lord [Aurangzeb], who was as bounteous as the ocean, opened his generous hands and bestowed prestigious rewards upon all princes of noble lineage and high rank, honored ladies, and other imperial servants. High-ranking nobles and other pious personages all found themselves promoted in station and rank with new honorific titles, and contended among themselves for glory. Appropriate rewards and expensive gifts were bestowed upon multitudes of pious, God-fearing men, and also upon poets, musicians, and entertainers at mirthful gatherings.

A high imperial order was issued that the auspicious festivities continue thus until the tenth of Zi l-hijja [August 28, 1659], at which point they would merge with the arrival of Id-i azha; in this way, during that span of time, everyone's dearest wishes would be realized and all their long-held hopes fulfilled. The date of [Aurangzeb's] accession was commemorated by a chronogram penned by Mulla Shah-i Badakhshi, "*zill al-haqq*" [Shadow of God/Truth]; he also composed the following poem:

The dawn of my heart blossomed like the rose of the sun,
 For Truth/God [*haqq*] has come and swept away false dust [*ghubar-i batil*].
 The date of accession of the Truth-perceiving king [*shah-i haqq-agah*]
 Is known as "*zill al-haqq*"; verily [*al-haqq*] this is called the truth [*haqq*].
 One scholar discovered [the chronogram] in "*padshah-i mulk-i haft-iqlim*" ["Padishah of the Kingdom of the Seven Climes"], and a poet
 found it in the hemistich
 "*Zib-i ourang-u-taj-ha-yi shahan*"
 [Adornment of the thrones and crowns of kings]

Mulla 'Azizullah, son of Mulla Taqi Isfahani, quoted from the words of God: "*Inna l-mulka l-illahi yu'tay-hu man yashsha'a*."³⁴

Because the luminous lights of victory cast their rays of fortune upon the earth during the month of Ramazan, [Aurangzeb] ordered that the first day of that month mark the beginning of his reign in [imperial] records and calendars.

Following the custom of Jamshid and Kasravi [Anushervan], [Aurangzeb's] predecessors³⁵ had considered the first day of Farvardi [Farvardin] to be one of the most important festivals [*az 'id-ha-yi buzurg*], and their tradition [*rasm*] was to celebrate it with much fanfare; the refuge of religion [*padishah-i din-panah*] Emperor [Aurangzeb] ordered that an imperial celebration be held [*jashn-i padishahana*] each year during the blessed month of Ramazan instead of the festival of Nouruz, continuing through the auspicious 'Id-i fitr with mirthful customs. This [celebration] would be known as "the joy-illuminating festival" [*jashn-i nishat-afroz*] . . . Praise be to God that today, by the fortune [*dawlat*] of the religion-fostering

adorners of the imperial throne [Aurangzeb], all of Hindustan has been rid of the contamination of innovations [*bida'*] and heresies [*ahva'*].³⁶

Meanwhile, word came from Bengal that Prince Muhammad Sultan [Aurangzeb's son], who had been appointed along with Mu'azzam Khan to eradicate Shah Shuja', had been taken in by his deceiving ways. On the twenty-seventh of Ramazan [June 18, 1659], he embarked upon a boat with several of his servants with the intention of defecting to Shah Shuja's side, taking the path of rebellion [*mukhalafat*]. . . .

At this time, Bahadur Khan conveyed Dara Shukuh to the celestial threshold [Aurangzeb's imperial court] and was held at the Khizrabad palace. Because for various reasons it became necessary to erase the dust of his existence from the courtyard of the kingdom of the living, on the night of Thursday, the twenty-first of the month of Zi l-hijja [September 9, 1659], the lamp of his life was extinguished, and he was buried in that nest of paradise, the tomb of Emperor Humayun. . . .

During this time, out of generosity toward the common people, [Aurangzeb] ordered that the road tax on stores of grain and other kinds of goods be lifted in perpetuity; therefore, an annual sum of 25 lakh rupees was withdrawn out of the [revenue from] imperial lands [*khalisa-yi sharifa*]; the accountant of the mind is unable to comprehend all the [monetary and other obligations] that were pardoned [by Aurangzeb] throughout the entire empire.

Aurangzeb's Letter to His Son, Prince Muhammad Mu'azzam

[*Raqa'im-i Kara'im*, #106]

If you agree with my strategy for ensuring peace and satisfaction—that is, the division of the kingdom after the departure of this frail one [Aurangzeb]—then the only solution is to place your younger son [Aurangzeb's grandson] in Kabul with a great army and Muhammad Mu'izz al-Din Bahadur³⁷ in Multan with sufficient supplies. All this has been indicated in written testaments [*vasaya*]. There are many illustrious notables, claimants, and people on both sides³⁸ who would kindle the fires of battle [while striving to acquire power]; in doing so, they commend the state to its grave and consign their lives to bitterness. One such man was Muhammad Dara Shukuh. Had he listened to the advice of His Majesty [Shahjahan] and paid scrupulous attention to His Majesty's counsel, he would have acted [in a better manner], and there would have been no reason for him to come to such a bad end. After all, the truth [*haqq*, that is, rightful claim to the throne] was also on his side [*bar taraf-i u ham bud*]. Greed hounds mankind, granting him not even a moment's respite.

[Arabic prayer] O God, make the community of Muhammad righteous, and may you be pleased with the community of Muhammad. Peace be upon Him and His family and the companions; praise be to Him at the beginning and at the end; peace [be with you].

POEMS FROM DARA SHUKUH'S *DIVAN*

Ghazal No. 60

Make my heart joyful, Muslims!
 Free yourselves from fetters and restraints.
 My heart constricts with sadness from apprenticeship;
 For the sake of Truth/God [*haqq*], make me a master!
 Take me beyond all tribes,
 Do not remember me again.
 I tear my nets to pieces.
 How long will you make a hunter of me?
 As Qadiri has done, you too destroy all heresy, belief, religious sects
 Except for Truth/God.

Ghazal No. 134

The leader [*pir*] of the wine tavern gave the order for music and dance
 [*sama'*];
 Farewell to all other ascetics [*zahidan*] besides myself [*ma*]!
 The wine tavern and I [*ma*], music, dance [*sama'*] and ecstasy [*vajd*]:
 Tell me, then, what's better than these wares?
 The believer and the infidel [*mu'min u kafir*] did not accept me;
 My truth [*haqiqat-am*] and heresy [*kufir*] were in complete agreement [*ijma'*].
 When the sun of certainty rose to its zenith,
 The darkness of illusion became illuminated with light.
 Heresy and Islam [*kufir u islam*] became one and the same [*yik-san shud*];
 For Qadiri, then, no dispute remains.

Ghazal No. 174

Captivator of God-fearing hearts,
 Leader [*sarvar*] of the gnostics [*arifan*] and the lowly;
 Heir to the seat of the messenger of the Lord [Muhammad],
 Guide, showing the way to those who are lost;
 Like Jesus, reviver of those with deadened hearts,
 A balm for the wounds of uprooted souls.
 That Muhammad [the Prophet] was the king of messengers [*shah-i rasu-
lan bud*];
 This Muhammad [Dara Shukuh] would be king of kings [*buvad shah-i
shahan*]
 Qadiri extended his hand to the royal hem [*bi daman-i shah*];
 He is not one of those who fall short [*dast-kutahan*].

NOTES

1. For a first-person account of an earlier succession, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 123–64.
2. On the active role played by (noble) women in high-level political matters, see Michael H. Fisher, *The Mughal Empire* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 18–19, 143–44.
3. For a concise account of these events, see, for instance, Fisher, *The Mughal Empire*, 182–206; and John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 151–84. The second selection here, an excerpt from the *Maasir-i 'alamgiri*, also presents a detailed account of the war of succession.
4. For an example of the former, see Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 290; for the latter, see Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb Based on Original Sources*, 5 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1920). For an overview of the “decline” model and its detractors, see Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*; Meena Bhargava, ed., *The Decline of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); Seema Alavi, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008); Abhishek Kaicker, *Unquiet City: Making and Unmaking Politics in Mughal Delhi, 1707–39* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014).
5. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 165–252.
6. See Fisher, *The Mughal Empire*, 130.
7. Jadunath Sarkar, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib (English Translation of Ahkam-i-Alamgiri Ascribed to Hamid-ud-din Khan Bahadur)* (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar & Sons, 1949), 24.
8. Annemarie Schimmel, “Dara Sokoh,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 7 (London, 1994; New York, 2011) fasc. 1: 2–5, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kadimi-zoroastrian-sect>.
9. Dara Shukuh refers to both Hindus and Muslims (provocatively, but not incorrectly) as *muvaḥhidun*, “monotheists.”
10. Dara Shukuh, *Majma' al-bahrayn*, ed. M. Malfuz-ul-Haq, 1989 (1929), 79. This couplet is from the first section (on monotheism [*touhid*]) of Sana'i's sufi *masnavi*, *Hadiqat al-haqiqat va shari'at al-tariqat*. As the editor points out, this couplet was also used in an inscription penned by Abul Fazl in Kashmir. Carl Ernst has noted the importance of a significant deviation from Sana'i's original: Dara Shukuh substitutes “islam” for Sana'i's “religion” (“*din*”), which Ernst says gives the couplet “a political character implying Hindu and Islamic communities or doctrines”; Aurangzeb took this to be clear proof of Dara Shukuh's heresy. Carl Ernst, “Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages,” *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 187.
11. For an important reevaluation of such received characterizations of Dara Shukuh and his implied ideological opposition to Aurangzeb, see Rajeev Kinra, “Infantilizing Baba Dara: The Cultural Memory of Dara Shekuh and the Mughal Public Sphere,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009): 165–93. Kinra notes, for instance, that “despite the great admiration in some circles for Dara's intellect and cultural patronage, there was also a significant, and important, constituency of Hindu and Muslim alike that disliked him for entirely non-sectarian reasons, sometimes having to do with a belief that Dara's

narcissistic arrogance made him unfit for the throne, and sometimes out of pure personal enmity” (168).

12. Many editors (especially the editor of Aurangzeb’s letters, and to a lesser extent Sarkar in his translation of the *Maasir*) opt for concise paraphrase, shearing historical texts of “extraneous” couplets and prayers and condensing personal letters to their “general gist.” This can be as reductive and misleading as describing the Taj Mahal as simply a mausoleum: filigree and inscriptions may not be what keeps the structure standing, but these ornamental features are by no means merely ancillary to its meaning.
13. From Aqil Khan Razi, *Vaqi’at-i ‘alamgiri of Aqil Khan Razi (An Account of the War of Succession Between the Sons of the Emperor Shah Jahan)*, ed. Khan Bahadur Maulvi Haji Zafar Hasan (Delhi: Mercantile Printing Press, 1946). 46–50. A slightly different version of this letter is given in Muhammad Salih Kamboh, *‘Amal-i Salih*, also known as the *Shahjahan-nama al-mousum bi Shahjahan-nama*, ed. Ghulam Yazdani and Vahid Qurayshi, vol. 3, no. 4 (Lahur: Majlis-i Taraqqi-yi Adab, 1967–1972), 290–92.
14. Aurangzeb, *Raqa’im-i kara’im (Epistles of Aurangzeb)*, collected by Saiyid Ashraf Khan Husaini, ed. S. M. Azizuddin Husain (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1990), 59.
15. Aurangzeb, *Raqa’im-i kara’i*, 81.
16. Dara Shukuh belonged to the Qadiri Sufi order, to which his poetic pen name (*takhal-lus*) eponymously refers.
17. His great-grandfather Akbar’s famous policy of “universal peace” or “tolerance for all”; see Fisher, *The Mughal Empire*, 130.
18. Prince Muhammad Dara Shukuh, *Divan-i Dara Shukuh*, ed. Ahmad Nabi Khan (Mashhad: Nashr-i Nuvid, 1985), Ghazal 42.
19. Dara Shukuh, *Divan-i Dara Shukuh*, Ghazal 174.
20. See Muzaffar Alam, “In Search of a Sacred King: Dārā Shukoh and the *Yogavāsīṣṭas* of Mughal India,” *History of Religions* 55, no. 4 (May 2016): 429–59.
21. For a detailed discussion of the problems surrounding the definition and translation of the term “*haqq*,” see William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), xxiv.
22. On the significance of the deliberate homage paid by Shahjahan’s title “*sahib-qiran-i sani*” (Second Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction) to Timur, its first bearer (“*sahib-qiran*”), see A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 23 et passim.
23. “*Yasfiku d-dima*” is a Qur’anic phrase from the Surat al-Baqara. In this verse, the angels express consternation at God’s decision to invest humans with temporal authority, objecting (no doubt, quite rightly) that political power wielded by human beings would be a bloody business:

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority [*khalifa*].” They [the angels] said, “Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?” Allah said, “Indeed, I know that which you do not know.” (Q. 2:30, Sahih International)

24. “*Buland-iqbal*,” (he whose fortune is great) was an official title given to Dara Shukuh by Shahjahan in one of several public demonstrations of his esteem and preference for his eldest son during the years leading up to the wars of succession. See Fisher, *The Mughal Empire*, 182 et passim.
25. “*Ula al-amri min-kum*,” from the Surat al-Nisa’; echoing the previous Qur’anic reference, this verse also attempts to allay any doubts concerning the authority of those in power:

O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result. (Q. 4:59, Sahih International)
26. Occasionally, some secondary literature and older translations of Mughal texts provide equivalents for Islamic (*hijri*) dates using the older, pre-1582 Julian calendar, which lags behind the modern Gregorian calendar during this period by ten days. The date of Dara Shukuh’s execution (the twenty-first of Zi l-hijja, 1069 AH) is therefore sometimes given as August 30, 1659 (Julian), and sometimes September 9, 1659 (Gregorian). All Islamic (*hijri*) dates here are converted to their Gregorian equivalents. For the history of various calendar systems, see Reza Abdollahi, “Calendars ii. In the Islamic Period,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; see also M. Athar Ali, F. C. de Blois, et al., “Ta’rikh,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.
27. This epithet is applied to Dara Shukuh several times throughout the *Ma’asir*. Typical Persian terms for “heresy” (in the Oxford English Dictionary sense of the term, defined on the basis of Christianity as any “theological or religious opinion or doctrine maintained in opposition . . . to that of any church, creed, or religious system, considered as orthodox”) include “*ilhad*” (mentioned in this text), “*zandaqa*,” “*ghuluvv*” (exaggeration), “*bid’at*” (innovation), and others, many of which have historically specific meanings. The use of “*zalalat*” here, in the etymologically laden sense of “error, deviation,” has Qur’anic resonances: words with the root *ḏ-l-l* appear in many verses, including the Surat al-Fatiha, which closes with an invocation to God to “guide us to the straight path [*sirat al-mustaqim*] / the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray [*al-dallina*]” (Q. 1:6–7, Sahih International). It is likely that the *Ma’asir* stresses the heretical leanings of Dara Shukuh in this way to provide sufficient narrative justification for his eventual execution—the official reason for which was heresy. On Dara Shukuh’s trial and execution for heresy, see Craig Davis, “Dara Shukuh and Aurangzib: Issues of Religion and Politics and their Impact on Indo-Muslim Society” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2002), 29 et passim, for a nuanced reading of the charges leveled against Dara Shukuh in the *Ma’asir* and the *‘Alamgir-nama*.
28. A measure of distance in premodern South Asia, more familiarly known in Hindavi as “*kos*”; the exact length varies by region, but it is roughly equivalent to one-third of a mile. Compare entries by Hobson-Jobson, 261, and *Giyath al-Lughat*.
29. The phrase in its entirety, “*nasrun min allahi fathun qarib*,” is from the Surat al-Saff (Q. 61.13).

30. This is likely a reference to Aurangzeb and Jahanara's exchange of letters, demonstrating Aurangzeb's acquiescence to his sister's suggestion that he formulate his wishes to Shahjahan in writing.
31. Surat al-Nisa' (Q. 4:59). Part of this sentence, "*uli l-amri min-kum*," was quoted by Jahanara in her letter to Aurangzeb (see Note 24).
32. "*Qasab al-sabq-i bar-tar-i*" refers to the Arab custom of planting a reed in the ground for which two horsemen race, trying to see who can first tear it out and throw it in front of him. Compare Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 897, and Dehkhoda, "*Qasab al-sabq*" entry.
33. The "*kalima tayyiba*," that is, the *shahada*, (statement of faith): "*La ilaha illa l-lah, Muhammadun rasulu l-lah*": "There is no god except God, Muhammad is the apostle of God."
34. "Verily is [this] kingdom God's, he gives it to whomever he wills." Compare the end of Qur'an 2:247 (Sahih International): "*Wa l-lahu yu'ti mulka-hu man yashaa'u wa l-lahu wasi'un 'alimun*" ("And Allah gives His sovereignty to whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing [in favor] and Knowing."
35. Aurangzeb may have had Akbar's precedent in mind: in 1584, Akbar introduced the *tarikhi ilahi* (divine era), a new calendric system based on the solar year, whose months were taken from the pre-Islamic Persian calendar. The first day of the *ilahi* year was the Persian festival of Nouruz, and the calendar began with Akbar's accession. This ideologically potent action of "clearing the calendar" upon accession would not have been lost on Aurangzeb (see M. Athar Ali, "Ilahi Era", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.). Aurangzeb did not abolish the *ilahi* calendar, but he did try to expunge all of its "un-Islamic" aspects, especially Nouruz.
36. In Goldziher's definition, *ahl-i ahva'* is "a term applied by the orthodox theologians to those followers of Islam, whose religious tenets in certain details deviate from the general ordinances of the Sunnite confession" (Goldziher, "Ahl-i Ahwa'", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.).
37. That is, his son's other son; this grandson's birth is mentioned in the *Ma'asir*..
38. The precise meaning of "both sides" here is ambiguous; he is alluding, perhaps, to his own succession war with his brothers.

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FIGURE 6.1 *Nasiri Khan Directing the Siege of Qandahar, May 1631*

The artist Payag created a dramatic depiction of the siege of Qandahar (northwest of Hyderabad) in 1631. Here, Shah Jahan's famous general A'zam Khan (the central figure on horseback) directs the assault. The text records (*not shown*) describes the moment being depicted: "While preparations were underway to take the fortress, A'zam Khan arrived. Nasiri Khan [Khan Dawran] went out to welcome him and then took him to watch the fortress being blown up, and in his presence the three mines that had been packed with gunpowder were lit."

Source: The siege of Qandahar (plate 18), folio f.102b, the Windsor *Padshahnama*

Artist: Payag (1595–c. 1650)

Date: c. 1633

Place of origin: Agra, India

Credit: Royal Collection Trust © 2016 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II/The Bridgeman Art Library. RCIN

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6. A Tale of Three Cities: Diplomacy and Conquest

A central feature of empire as a system is its tendency to expand and contract during the course of its existence. Although the Ottoman Empire had experienced nearly two centuries of growth by the time the Safavids and Mughals emerged on the scene at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was still expanding and setting the terms of engagement with Christian kingdoms (in countries of today's Eastern Europe) and with their Muslim adversaries such as the Safavids to the east and the Mamluks to the south. Characteristically, the three empires achieved their territorial expansion through various means of domination, the main two being incorporating the periphery kingdoms into the empire either by weakening or dissolving them through marriage and subjugating less resourceful neighbors and local resistances through direct military conquest. New advances in gunpowder technology made the latter option expedient and more lethal, and it significantly shifted the balance of power in favor of the central power and at the expense of opposition forces that often used traditional methods of warfare, such as a heavy reliance on light cavalry and archery. In fact, the Ottoman Empire's power of territorial expansion was a result of their flexibility in integrating new military armaments into their existing armies. For example, it was Mehmet II's massive cannons and effective land-sea blockade that finally brought down the walls of Constantinople in 1453. His descendant, Selim, and his generals' effective use of field artillery against the Safavids in 1514 at Chaldiran, who rejected guns as unmanly, ended the Safavids' westward expansion. Similarly, two years later Selim's use of artillery helped defeat the Mamluks of Egypt and completely ousted them from power. The Mughals, too,

overwhelmed their opponents with their military power in their southward expansion, absorbing local Rajput dynasts into their empire.

In the first essay, Hani Khafipour discusses the fate of the city of Qandahar (in today's Afghanistan), which was caught between the expanding Safavid and Mughal empires during the early seventeenth century when the two monarchies were at the height of their powers, the former under Shah 'Abbas and the latter under Emperor Jahangir. The two had exchanged many letters over the years, some dating back to when Jahangir was the heir-apparent to Emperor Akbar. In contrast to Ottoman-Safavid hostile relations, they attempted to sustain a cooperative relationship and valued their houses' historical friendship. The work translated here is a correspondence between the two monarchs regarding jurisdiction over the city at a crucial time when Shah 'Abbas had seized it from Mughal control, a decision that threatened to impair their relations and exacerbate the existing geopolitical rivalry between the two states.

In the second essay, Zahit Atcil demonstrates the importance of the Ottoman conquest of Buda(pest) in the early sixteenth century within the context of the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry in Hungary as the two warring empires sought to increase their respective territories and spheres of influence. The work translated is Sultan Suleiman's victory letter (*fathnama*) to the Doge of Venice, Pietro Lando, after the capture of the city. Similar to 'Abbas's letter to Jahangir, this *fathnama* is an example of postconquest diplomacy on the part of the aggressor to induce cooperation. Diplomatic correspondences and *fathnamas* were highly political and judiciously composed, and they are an important resource for examining ideological instruments that the three empires used to project their power and disclose their geopolitical concerns.

Similarly, in the final essay, Taymiya Zaman examines the Mughal conquest of Chittor in 1568, which proved pivotal for the history of the subcontinent, by analyzing Emperor Akbar's *fathnama* written shortly thereafter. Akbar's spectacular territorial expansion in this period was due to his successful military campaigns in subduing the Rajput warrior elites, appointing loyal Rajputs to high government ranks, as well as incorporating noble houses into the Mughal royal family through marriage alliances. Zaman's analysis of the *fathnama* of Chittor reveals the multifaceted nature of Akbar's political strategies as he attempted to give coherence to his sovereignty as a triumphant Muslim ruler presiding over an ethno-religiously diverse empire.

I. Imperial Geopolitics and the Otiose Quest for Qandahar

HANI KHAFIPOUR

A CITY MAROONED BETWEEN TWO EMPIRES

The city of Qandahar (2006 estimated population of 324,800) in today's Afghanistan has had a rather tumultuous past. Within the last three decades alone, the city has endured prolonged interference and occupation. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979–1989) fueled a brutal civil war, which was followed by the ruthless rule of the Taliban regime (1996–2001). Taliban governance, in turn, collapsed due to the invasion by the United States and its “allies” after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States by al-Qa‘ida operating from Afghanistan, leading to a new era of chaos and sociopolitical instability.

As important as this city has been for the region and for imperial powers in recent years, scholarship concerning its sociopolitical and religious history remains in its infancy as evidenced by the dearth of monographs and scholarly articles.¹ Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, a subgenre of popular literature has emerged, retrieving orientalist imaginings of the city and its inhabitants. Books such as *Virgins of Kandahar*, *Lord Roberts of Kandahar* (a recent reprint of an old classic), and *The Girl from Kandahar* speak volumes about the damaging effects of neo-orientalist perceptions at a time of rising xenophobia in Europe and North America.²

The city's premodern history is no less eventful. Qandahar was a part of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (559–339 BCE), taken by Alexander III of Macedon in 329 BCE, and coveted by many succeeding political orders that ruled the area. Qandahar's political importance was intimately linked to its commercial value

due to its location on the east-west trade route, which resulted in the city becoming prosperous and culturally vibrant. Large caravans carrying cloth, cotton, sugar, spices, and indigo passed through this Afghan town on their way to cities in central Iran and beyond.³ Jurisdiction over this lucrative transit route was paramount to those who claimed dominion over the region.

During the fifteenth century, members of the Timurid dynasty that controlled eastern Iran laid a natural claim to the area after the great Central Asian conqueror Timur (d. 1405) subjugated Qandahar and its dependencies in 1383–84.⁴ Under the rule of his descendants, particularly Shah Rukh (d. 1447) and later Sultan Husain Bayqara (r. 1469–1506) and his talented minister Mir ‘Ali Shirnavai (d. 1501), the city gradually became a small hub of intellectual activity that attracted poets, craftsmen, and scholars. What fueled this development was the relative political stability, which safeguarded vast trade networks that brought into the city ideas, commerce, and the promise of prosperity.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, when both the Safavid and Mughal empires were in an expansion phase, Qandahar’s distant location created the impression that it was a city marooned and without “proper ownership.” Situated on the utmost periphery of both empires, firm control of Qandahar’s politics and commerce was difficult to achieve, which made it a suitable target for “rebel” forces. Its symbolic political significance and real economic value added to its vulnerability to imperial takeover, creating a setting for repeated military violence. In contrast to more centrally located Safavid towns such as Kashan, Isfahan, and Shiraz, during this time Qandahar witnessed much more strife due to frequent invasions by both dynasties. Yet, the fate of the city, as will be seen below, would be tied to the very survival of the Safavid state more than two centuries later.

The city’s distance from either imperial capital made its conquest logistically difficult while making its capture tantalizingly promising. A successful takeover required meticulous planning, infinite resources, and impeccable timing. The Safavids managed to hold the city for nearly five decades broken up into two time periods when, first, Tahmasb I (r. 1524–1576) and later his grandson, ‘Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), were able to commit enormous military resources to guard it from the Mughals. The powerful Uzbek confederation fiercely contested the presence of the two empires in its backyard and posed a constant threat to the geopolitical ambitions of the two empires. As the rivalry among the powers intensified during the early seventeenth century, jurisdiction over the city of Qandahar resurfaced.

CONTESTED GEOGRAPHIES

To which of the seven climes (ancient territorial conceptions) Qandahar belonged was an important political question that needed an answer.⁵ Had the Mughals, the Safavids, and the Uzbeks searched previous geographies to settle the question and justify their claim to the city historically, they would have been disappointed. One

of the most widely cited geographers of the era, the mid-fourteenth-century Ilkhanid bureaucrat Hamd Allah Mustawfi, offers little information about Qandahar, but his contemporary, the anonymous author of *Haft Kishvar* (*The Seven Realms*), locates Qandahar as a fringe city of India (Hind).⁶ The author of *Haft Kishvar* was no doubt influenced by a previous conception of Qandahar's locale. A much older geographical treatise, the anonymous tenth-century *Hudud al-'Alam* unequivocally locates Qandahar within the realm of Hindustan.⁷

With the rise of the Timurid dynasty in the fifteenth century, Khurasan became a center of their power, and Qandahar was envisioned within their domain. This is reflected in the late fifteenth-century geographer Mu'in al-Din al-Asfazari's conception of the city, for example.⁸ The Timurid historian Ghiyath al-Din Khvandamir (d. 1534), author of the famed work *Habib al-Siyar* and who later served the early Mughal rulers (first Babur and later his son Humayun), is surprisingly hesitant to consider the city as part of Hindustan and belonging to his patrons, perhaps due to the earlier Timurid designation of Qandahar as part of Khurasan.⁹

Geographers in the service of the Safavids, such as Muhammad Mufid Bafiqi, had few reservations regarding where to locate Qandahar and explicitly considered it as part of the fourth clime that includes Khurasan and towns such as Balkh, Mary, Tus, and other major provinces at the limits of the Safavid's eastern territories.¹⁰

Closer to the center of power, Iskandar Beg Turkman, Shah 'Abbas's royal secretary who produced a major history of the Safavid house when the dispute over Qandahar reemerged in the early seventeenth century, follows the Timurid categorization and explicitly claims the city to be a part of Khurasan, a province that the dynasty indisputably considered its own as part of its conception of Iran-zamin and "protected lands."¹¹ This allowed Iskander Beg to justify his patron's invasion as recclamation of lost territory, however imagined, a claim that Shah 'Abbas also makes in his letter translated here.

Iskandar's interpretation and his king's claim to the city rested primarily on Shah Ismail's (r. 1501–1524) temporary annexation of the city in 1511, followed by that of Shah Tahmasb whose policy helped the Safavids retain the city for much of the later sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the Mughal house had an older hereditary claim to the region through their direct descent from Timur, who subjugated the region in 1383. Although the geographers differed in their view regarding to which of the two realms—Hindustan or Khurasan—Qandahar belonged over the centuries, political men at court sought to serve their respective rulers' territorial ambitions and bring this fringe town within their imperial domain.

POLITICAL IMPASSE AND RESOLUTION THROUGH CONQUEST

Although the Safavid and Mughal houses were newcomers to the geopolitical game in this area, those in their service were not, and knew well the importance of

Qandahar. Politically, to control the vast territories south of Khurasan and north of Sistan they would need to be in full possession of this commercial transit town. This much was indisputable. When the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail, in 1511 temporarily managed to annex the province, he set the precedent for his house's claim to the city. However, Ismail's fickle ally Babur (d. 1530), who later established the Mughal dynasty, took possession of the city in 1522, taking advantage of the loss of the Qizilbash's military power and esprit de corps as a result of their devastating defeat against the Ottomans at the battle of Chaldiran.¹²

Both the early Safavid and Mughal rulers found the province of Qandahar indispensable for their expansionist objectives. Babur's Turco-Mongol Chaghatay troops, who considered Transoxiana to the north inhospitable due to the presence of the formidable Uzbek confederacies, found respite from their threat in this province; therefore, it was vital for his survival. The early Safavid Qizilbash riders, however, whose center of power was near Azerbaijan, eastern Anatolia, and central Iran, also feared the oft-brewing Uzbek military threat in Transoxiana, which could destabilize their eastern frontiers.¹³ Khurasan, one of the most important and vulnerable Safavid provinces, with its prized city of Herat, bore the brunt of several major Uzbek offensives throughout the sixteenth century, and its defense became paramount for the Safavids. Control of Qandahar meant the ability to better protect Khurasan because the Safavids could dispatch reinforcements quickly from there when needed and to bolster their meager presence on their eastern frontier. In their deliberations, certainly the commercial importance of the city did not go unnoticed.

In 1537, Shah Ismail's son and successor, Tahmasb, after gaining full reign of state affairs and surviving the bloody civil war that had raged for a decade between the Qizilbash confederates after his accession, marshaled enough forces to take the city. That effort was wasted when a year later the Mughal prince Kamran (d. 1557) challenged his brother Humayun's (d. 1556) claim to the throne and in the ensuing struggle for succession occupied the city.

Humayun, suffering a string of defeats, fled to the Safavid court. Tahmasb received him royally because he saw a valuable opportunity in supporting Humayun's bid to regain the Mughal throne.¹⁴ In exchange for military aid, Humayun would have to renounce his claim to the city¹⁵ and profess Shi'ism as his faith.¹⁶ The issue of Humayun's conversion is a complex one and calls into question the conventional notions of conversion in this period as discussed by Rudi Mathee in chapter 1 of this volume. His decision to acquiesce may have served, for instance, as a symbolic act that acknowledged Tahmasb's dominance and confirmed his patronage of a new "client." Aside from the significance of the power dynamic, Tahmasb would have been hard pressed to commit his meager resources, already depleted from years of war with the Ottomans, to the exiled Mughal ruler without something valuable in return. Humayun agreed to the conditions, but, as is often the case in compulsory political pacts, he likely had no intention of honoring either condition. The city fell to Safavid forces in 1545. When Tahmasb's newly appointed governor

died, Humayun wasted no time in incorporating the city into his territory and extricating himself of any Shi'i leaning.

Humayun was a direct descendant of the great conqueror Timur, who was also known as the true "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction"; it was widely believed that his exploits had been foretold and verified through astrological calculations.¹⁷ It seems that such a pedigree furnished Timur's descendants with a genuine claim to authority over a vast kingdom that included Qandahar. Perhaps the Mughal dynasts believed that this was a greater legitimacy for territorial claims than Tahmasb's sacred imami lineage.¹⁸

At that time, Tahmasb and his beleaguered troops were on the verge of collapse when the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman (d. 1566) and Tahmasb's own brother, the renegade Prince Alqas (d. 1550), led a massive invasion into Iran to divest him of the Safavid crown. As a result, he did not have sufficient resources to deal with Humayun's breach of their agreement on the eastern fringe of his kingdom. When peace with the Ottomans was finally reached in 1555 and ratified in a treaty at Amasya, Tahmasb felt secure enough to organize an eastern campaign to retake the city. Humayun was dead by the time the Safavid campaign got under way, and Tahmasb and his generals used the turmoil at the Mughal court to their advantage. His forces recaptured the city in 1558 and retained it for nearly the rest of the century. From this point on, Tahmasb and later Safavid monarchs considered Qandahar to be the outmost limit of their domain.

Tahmasb points to this conception of the extent of his kingdom in his memoirs. In one notable passage, he describes how he was about to turn the renegade Ottoman prince Bayazid—who had taken refuge at his court—over to the Ottoman delegation because he had discovered that the prince had plotted to poison him and his inner circle; he tells Bayazid:

Praise the Lord! What ill had I done to you? My sin was that I did not wish rebellion and turmoil to reign, and wanted through pleading to reach peace and good will, and with Sultan Suleiman's approval, to grant you a domain in the limits of Qandahar (*dar sar hadd-i Qandahar*) the way I had done to Padishah Humayun. Is this how you repay me?

After that, I jailed him, and stripped some members of his entourage (of all possessions) and abandoned them to wherever they wanted to stray.¹⁹

Tahmasb then surrendered Bayazid and his men to the delegation. On the orders of his father Sultan Suleiman, the prince along with his sons were summarily executed.

Decades later, when Tahmasb's grandson 'Abbas (d. 1629) ascended the throne in 1587, the Safavid house's authority was severely weakened once again because of the power struggle among the Qizilbash confederate chiefs. The Ottomans, always attentive to Safavid internal affairs, took advantage of Qizilbash disunity and captured Iran's western provinces. This time they were able to create a foothold in Azerbaijan and occupy the former Safavid capital of Tabriz for almost two decades. To make matters worse for the young shah, the Uzbeks renewed their military

efforts to annex much of Khurasan in the east. The Safavid house, once again, was facing a two-front invasion and in a dire struggle to retain the territory conquered by Shah Ismail. At this low point, the Mughal emperor Akbar (d. 1605) joined in on the land-grab frenzy—taking advantage of the rising Uzbek threat—and accepted Qandahar governor Muzaffar Husain Mirza's (a minor Safavid prince) offer to annex the city in 1595.

'Abbas spent the first decade of his reign slaughtering his domestic rivals, the Qizilbash chiefs, just as brutally as they had killed his allies and family members, including his grandmother and mother Khayr al-Nisa Begum (Mahd-i Awliya) (d. 1579), whom they had strangled to death when 'Abbas was a child. 'Abbas's next challenge after quashing internal dissent was to contain the Ottomans who had taken over fertile lands and trade routes in Azerbaijan, Iraq, and the Caucasus. These humiliating defeats made him obsessed with restoring his house's prestige and power through "reconquest." He even targeted the Portuguese mariners who dominated the sea trade of the Persian Gulf without any clearance from his court. 'Abbas considered the strong Portuguese presence on the southern shores of his kingdom an affront to his authority. By 1623, he was able to recapture most of the lost Safavid territories, including symbolically important Iraqi cities such as Baghdad and Mosul, and the Shi'i holy towns of Karbala, Najaf, and Samarra. 'Abbas waged war more successfully than any other Safavid monarch.

Once he had secured peace with the Ottomans at Sarab in 1618, 'Abbas turned his full attention to Qandahar. Predictably, his diplomatic attempts to persuade Jahangir (d. 1627) to relinquish the city in his favor failed; no one expected the Mughal emperor to simply surrender a city through exchange of envoys. If Jahangir had accepted, the loss of Mughal prestige alone would have been unimaginable.²⁰ At the very least, a decent siege was to be expected, especially for a commercial town such as Qandahar with its legendary impenetrable walls, which had compelled more than a few of its keepers to hold fast in previous sieges.²¹

The contemporary chronicler Mirza Beg Junabadi reported on a debate at the Mughal court regarding the fate of Qandahar while the Safavid ambassador Zaynal Beg was in attendance. When Jahangir hesitated to make a decision, the highly influential queen Nur Jahan (d. 1645) and her allies recommended capitulation, but another faction expressed firm opposition to any concession. As Junabadi writes:

But some of the unintelligent [at court] and those whose pride had overcome them like the Prince Khurram [that is, the future Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan], Ghiyath Beg, and Khan Kakhaki opposed surrendering [the city], and in the garment of arrogance they abandoned prudence and conveyed that "it does not befit kingly honor (*namus*) to relinquish a province that was won by the sword through a single dispatch. True that in kingship there are all kinds of royal largess, but granting of provinces has never become customary among kings. They [the Safavids] will consider [our] decision based on their deception foolish and say 'with a single missive we grabbed a great province from that so-and-so king.' In any circumstance, not to concede has preeminence."²²

This led to a heated argument between the two opposing sides, during which the Safavid ambassador fell out of favor with his hosts and was deeply humiliated.²³

Prior to Zaynal Beg's mission, 'Abbas had led two unsuccessful attempts to take the city, once in 1604–05, the year Emperor Akbar died, and once more in 1607. At last, in 1622, after enough men had died, he and his troops enjoyed their long awaited victory. In the same year, his devoted general Imam Quli Khan, with the help of the English warships, also wrested the islands of Qishm and Hurmuz from the Portuguese, adding to the Shah's sense of triumph.²⁴

'Abbas's reconquest of Qandahar is an example of an imperial appropriation of a productive frontier commercial and cultural hub. The Mughals had hereditary rights to rule the city and its districts and believed that this surpassed any political agreements they had previously made with the Safavids. 'Abbas, however, flouted the rationality behind hereditary rights and pressed his case based on his grandfather's accord with Humayun. He alluded to this in his letter to Jahangir translated here.

In a royal expression of *ta'aruf*, a type of hyperbolic comity, Iskandar Beg tells us that his master made two gold keys; upon one Qandahar was carved, and on the other names of several provinces of Iran from which the Mughal emperor was to choose as a gift. The seemingly superficial gesture shows 'Abbas's well-known political shrewdness toward his powerful Mughal adversary who was caught in an enfeebling diplomatic position.²⁵ It was vital that 'Abbas kept his relations with Jahangir as friendly as possible, for there were too many commercial networks and intellectual links between the two realms to risk further antagonism.²⁶ As such, he continuously sent envoys to Jahangir's court throughout this period to maintain amiable relations and to keep himself informed of Mughal affairs. Among the gifts that he sent Jahangir was a spectacular ruby upon which was inscribed the name of one of Jahangir's ancestors, Mirza Ulugh Beg (d. 1449) son of Shahrukh son of Timur.²⁷

At 'Abbas's death six years later, he bequeathed to his successor, Safi (r. 1629–1642), both secure borders and a stable political system, an arrangement he certainly did not possess when he ascended the throne.²⁸ Safi was not as astute a politician as his grandfather and is blamed for losing Qandahar less than a decade into his reign (1638–1649). His successor, 'Abbas II, however, made it a priority to retake the city, which he did in 1649. Qandahar would remain in Safavid hands for the rest of the century.²⁹

Later Safavid shahs, including 'Abbas II, prided themselves over the role that their ancestors played in helping to lay the foundation of the Mughal dynasty and often referenced Tahmasb's support of Humayun against the usurper Prince Kamran and his help in restoring the Mughal crown to its rightful heir.³⁰ In fact, 'Abbas II commissioned a large mural in the Chihil Sutun palace in Isfahan depicting the royal banquet that Tahmasb held in honor of Humayun. What 'Abbas II wished to project in this mural was the power and self-confidence that comes from having a celebrated dynastic legacy. By the time of 'Abbas II's generation, the Safavid shahs could use that currency to send a bold political message. It is no coincidence that he chose the subject of Humayun's seeking refuge nearly a century ago

in his ancestor's court precisely at the time when he wrested Qandahar from the Mughals.

By the opening of the eighteenth century, when the two empires began to show signs of political and military decay, Qandahar had become an isolated border city, caught between two shrinking empires. In the absence of a powerful central authority that could keep competing interest groups at bay, the city was subjected to the political machinations of ambitious military governors such as Gorgin Khan and Mir Wais, which led to prolong periods of unrest.³¹

As the city changed hands between the Uzbeks, the Safavids, and the Mughals a few times during its early modern history, in the violence of war it was soldiers with amputated limbs, farmers who were plundered by the approaching armies, and city peddlers whose families starved during the long sieges who paid the ultimate price.³² This territorial dispute is a poignant example of the fortunes of a fringe city whose inhabitants were caught amidst the ambitions of powerful rulers. Eventually the city that the Safavids worked so hard to preserve became the base of operation for Mahmud Ghilza'i and his Afghan confederate army, who sacked the Safavid capital Isfahan in 1722 and brought a once powerful dynasty to an inglorious end.³³

Qandahar had lost much of its luster by the time Nader Shah (r. 1736–1747) captured it in 1738. The city soon became the seat of power of a short-lived Afghan empire forged by Ahmad Shah Durrani (r. 1747–1773), who is considered by most Afghans to be the founder of their nation.

The following correspondence between Shah 'Abbas and Emperor Jahangir provides a firsthand account of a diplomatic waltz between two powerful monarchs at the height of their imperial powers.³⁴ It is written in an ornate style of Persian (the *lingua franca* of the time) that was characteristic of royal diplomacy during the medieval and early modern periods. In contrast to the antagonistic nature of Safavid-Ottoman relations, the Safavid's foreign policy toward the Mughals was generally amiable, which is evidenced by the voluminous correspondences between the two courts as well as by their extensive commercial and cultural interactions.³⁵ Dispute over possession of Qandahar was one of the exceptions in their otherwise friendly relations.

TRANSLATION

Letter from Shah 'Abbas I to Emperor Jahangir (c. 1620)

May the zephyrs of invitations that wafted from the fragrant gale of that blossom of yearning become the perfume of separation, and the rays of eulogies the splendor of whose purity the gathering of union has been illuminated become the rescuer of the darkness of estrangement.³⁶ The aroma of the kingly banquet and the authority of the supreme lord, the Shadow-of-God [that is, 'Abbas], that has become the candle of that gathering relays to the knowledge-loving heart and heaven-binding

mind of that brother who is equal to [my] life [that is, Jahangir], who is the mirror of the countenance of insight and intuition, and the reflection of the perfection of the creation's truth, that following the inescapable event regarding that heavenly Prince, my father [Muhammad Khudabandah] that transpired in Iran, certain domains have seceded from the guardianship of this blessed dynasty.

Since this destitute servant [Shah 'Abbas] of the [Heavenly] Court was adorned with the affairs of kingship, in the protection of Divine victory and with the support of companions, he has resolved to forcibly remove enemies that have occupied [our] lands. And, Qandahar that has been in possession of forces connected to that lofty dynasty [the Mughals] that we recognize as part of our own [family] [and therefore we] did not raise an objection [to this offense]. We had anticipated [however] that for the sake of alliance and brotherhood that they [the Mughal court] in the manner of their celestially ranked ancestors would address the issue.

When no action was taken, even with the dispatch of numerous missives, direct and indirect, we assumed that perhaps this land is no longer subject to negotiation and commanded that the [city] be returned to the descendants of this dynasty [Safavids] so that our adversaries would be silenced.

Some postponed and delayed taking action, and when the truth of the matter became known to friends as well as foes, and when no answer indicating acceptance or rejection [of the dispute] was received, it entered [my] benevolent mind to plan an expedition to Qandahar.³⁷ Perhaps in this manner, the servants [that is, Mughal military officials] of that famed and prosperous brother [Jahangir], based on friendship and the special relationship that exists between us, would welcome [our] felicitous army and be in our attendance so that unity between us would be apparent to all once again, and cause the silence of slanderers.

With this purpose in mind and without any siege machines we set out, and when we reached the region of Farah,³⁸ we dispatched a missive to its governor making clear our intention concerning the conquest of Qandahar so that he may welcome us as guests. We sent a message to the keepers of the castle that there is no estrangement between the shadow of God [Shah 'Abbas] and the victorious Prince [Jahangir] and whatever territory there is we recognize as each other's, and that our intention was sightseeing so that they would not undertake actions that would cause any animosity. They chose to ignore the truth and the tradition of friendship and unity and exhibited contumacy and disobedience. When we reached the castle, we dispatched a missive once again and for ten days we forbade our victorious army to get near the fortress. Our guidance was to no use as they persisted in their defiance.

When such negligence was no longer tenable, the Qizilbash army even without any siege machines began to seize the fortress and in little time leveled the tower and the citadel. The defenders then surrendered asking for mercy. Since the days of old, deep affection has existed between these two lofty dynasties, and the ways of brotherhood have existed between us since that august Prince's majestic heir-apparancy to such an extent as to cause envy among the rulers of the earth. [Because of this and] based on our innate magnanimity, we forgave their faults and errors and

instead made them recipients of our care and benefaction. In safety and under the supervision of our eminent commander Haydar Beg who is among the old faithful Sufis of this court, we have sent them to the majestic [Mughal] court. Indeed, the inherited and acquired foundation of justice and unity is strengthened to such an extent that it would not be damaged because of some affair that due to destiny manifested itself from hidden possibilities.

*Between you and I the way of anguish will not do
Except for the path of affection and loyalty none will do*

It is hoped that this approach will be embraced, as well, and that [the Emperor Jahangir] would not pay much heed to a trivial matter. And, if a flaw appears in the complainant's affection [toward us] based on the virtue of intrinsic kindness and inherited benevolence, consider all of our protected lands (*mamalik-i mahrusah*) your own and grant them to whomever you please, proclaim it and without any opposition it will be given to them. What little value such trivialities have. The commanders and dignitaries who were in the citadel, even though they undertook actions inconsistent with friendship, it was us who commenced what expired, and they only honored their duty and sense of self-sacrifice. Surely, that Prince would also show them royal mercy and compassion and would not cause us to be ashamed.

Lengthening discourse would be hyperbole. May the bright star [of fortune] continually conjoin Divine confirmation!

Jahangir's Letter in Response

Gratitude denuded of the garments of limit and comparison, and worship cleared of the pollution of metaphor and confusion is owed to that singular Lord, who has caused the strengthening of oaths and covenants of majestic kings in harmony with creation, and has made the cordial relations of world leaders to be the cause of welfare, serenity, and security of God worshipping creatures. And, the proof of this truth is the alliance, the union, and the bond that has manifested between these two dynasties [of ours], and has renewed during our reign to such an extent that has caused the envy of contemporary kings.

And [concerning] the king ['Abbas], the sapling of the garden of prophecy and guardianship (*vilayat*), the finest of the 'Alid house,³⁹ and the essence of the Safavid house, who without a reason sought to cause melancholia in the orchid of affection, friendship and brotherhood, upon which to the end of time the dust of imperfection would not settle. Certainly, the tradition of solidarity and unity among rulers of the world was not such that while professing to strengthen brotherhood and friendship (which one swears upon one's head), and spiritual affinity that undoubtedly exists between [us], [he would] undertake a hunting expedition [that is, *sayr va shikar*] in such a manner. Alas! Woe to our incomparable affection!

The arrival of [your] blessed letter of apology regarding the conquest of Qandahar that Haydar Beg and Vali Beg accompanied was the cause of much delight and exhilaration. It may not remain hidden from the majestic acumen of that august and fortunate brother [Shah 'Abbas] that until the arrival of the royal ambassador Zaynal Beg to our celestial court no missive concerning the appeal for Qandahar had reached us.⁴⁰ At that time while we were occupied with a hunt in the pleasant clime of Kashmir, the leaders of the Deccan based on their shortsightedness strayed from the path of obedience and servitude and rebelled. Thus it became necessary to punish and discipline them, and so our victorious banners turned toward Lahore. We had assigned our son Prince Shah Jahan to accompany the triumphant armies to deal with the accursed while we embarked toward the capital of the caliphate (*dar al-khilafah*) Agra. It was at this time that Zaynal Beg [the ambassador] arrived and brought the affectionate letters of that gracious lord. We considered this expression of friendship as an auspicious sign and marched toward the capital city to suppress the corrupt [rebels]. Even in that jewel-studded epistle, there was no appeal regarding Qandahar. Zaynal Beg conveyed the request orally and we responded that there is no refusal in anything between that fortunate brother and I. [We told Zaynal Beg] that God almighty willing, after we have dealt with the Deccan, we will send him on his way in a suitable manner, and because he had traveled a long time [we commanded that] he may rest in the seat of power, Lahore until we summon him.

After we arrived at Agra, the seat of the caliphate, we summoned him [so that he may obtain permission to leave]. Since this mendicant of the Heavenly Court [Jahangir] is aided by Divine Favor, the Deccan was conquered. We then turned toward Punjab and intended to send forth [Zaynal Beg]. However, due to some important affairs and the hot weather we instead marched toward Kashmir, whose agreeable climate is beyond dispute among the itinerants of the world. After arrival to that delightful kingdom, we summoned Zaynal Beg to show him the pleasure-inducing hunting grounds one by one and to grant him permission to leave. It was at this time that the news of that mighty brother's intention of conquering Qandahar, which we could not even imagine, reached us. We were stunned that he would undertake [the expedition] to acquire such an abandoned village himself and overlook our friendship, brotherhood, and alliance. Even though trustworthy scouts continued to bring news of the expedition, we would not believe [them].

Once the truth was manifested, we commanded 'Abd al-'Aziz Khan to do all that he could to secure that brother's [that is, Shah 'Abbas's] satisfaction. Until now, the bond of brotherhood remained strong, and we would not equate this level of affection and loyalty with the whole world, nor would we compare it to any priceless gift. However, brotherhood and sense of righteousness merited that [your majesty] should have remained patient until the arrival of [our] emissary. . . . Perhaps [your majesty] would have found [our] terms agreeable. Which side wise men of the world would judge to be the adornment of covenant, honesty, and the source of nobility and magnanimity?

May the Lord Almighty in all circumstances provide protection and victory, and bestow everlasting triumph and grace.

NOTES

1. Important works that have made inroads into the history of Qandahar (and Afghanistan) thus far include the Mir Muhammad Sadiq Farhang, *Afghanistan dar Panj Qarn-i Akhir* (Tehran, 1380); Warwick Ball. "The Seven Qandahars: The Name Q.ND.Har. in the Islamic Sources." *South Asian Studies* 4 (1988): 115–42; C. Edmund Bosworth, ed., "Kandahar," in *Historic Cities of the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Jahanbakhsh Thavabeq, "Nigarishi bar Shurish-i Shir Khan Afghan dar 'Asr-i Shah Safi (1040 H.Q.)," *Majalah-yi Danishkadah-yi Adabiyat va 'ulum-i Insani, Danishgah-i Isfahan* 40 (1384): 89–108; Sussan Babaie, "Shah 'Abbas II, the Conquest of Qandahar, the Chihil Sutun and Its Wall Paintings," *Muqamas* 11 (1994): 125–42; S. K. Banerji, "The Capture of Qandahar by Humayun, September 3, 1545," *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society* 13, no. 1 (1940): 39–50; Willem Floor. "Arduous Travelling: The Qandahar-Isfahan Highway in the Seventeenth Century," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed., Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 207–35; Mohammad Afzal Khan. "Safavis in Mughal Service: The Mirzas of Qandahar." *Islamic Culture* 72, no. 1 (1998): 59–81; C. P. Melville. "From Qars to Qandahar: The Itineraries of Shah 'Abbas I (995–1038/1587–1629)," in *Études Safavides*, ed. J. Calmard (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1993), 195–224.
2. For a number of insightful essays on modern literature and culture of Afghanistan in many of its manifestations, see Nile Green and Nushin Arabzadah, eds., *Afghanistan in Ink: Literature Between Diaspora and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
3. For a recent analysis of the Safavid-Mughal trade via Qandahar, see Floor, "Arduous Travelling."
4. Beatrice Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 66–74. For a general summary of Timur's rise to power and conquests, see David Morgan, *Medieval Persia (1040–1797)* (New York: Longman, 1988), 83–100. For a detail discussion on the intellectual history of fifteenth century Iran, see Ilker Evrim Binbas, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
5. According to Zoroastrian belief based on the Gathas and the Avesta (c. 1700–1000 BCE), the world is divided into seven concentric climatic zones, Iran being at the center. Some medieval and early modern geographers passed on the legend that Alexander of Macedon designated the "seven climes of the earth" as such. See, for instance, Muhammad Mufid Bafiqi's *Mukhtasar-i Mufid*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran, 1390), 17–18, 257–63. In the mid-fourteenth century, Hamd Allah Mustawfi conveyed the belief that the Prophet Idris divided the earth into the seven regions: Hamd Allah Mustawfi Qazvini, *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, ed. Muhammad Dabir Siyaqi (Tehran, 1388), 55–56. The fifteenth-century Timurid geographer Hafiz Abru, on the other hand, explained the seven divisions based on distance and latitude/longitude calculations: Shahab al-Din Khafi (Hafiz Abru), *Jughrafiya-i Hafiz Abru*, ed. Sadiq Sajjadi, vol. 1 (Tehran, 1375), 93–99.

6. Muhammad Mufid Bafiqi states that Hamd Allah mentions Qandahar as part of the fourth clime; I have not been able to verify his claim. See, Bafiqi, *Mukhtasar-i Mufid*, 262; Qazvini, *Nuzhat al-Qulub*; *Haft Kishvar*, ed. Manuchehr Sutudah (Tehran, 1353), 54.
7. *Hudud al-'Alam min al-Mashriq ila al-Maghrib*, ed. Manuchehr Sutudah (Tehran, 1983), 63–67.
8. Mu'in al-Din al-Asfazari, *Rawzat al-Jannat fi Awsaf Madinat Harat*, ed. Muhammad Ishaq (Calcutta: Rurpa Sari, 1961), vii, 244–47.
9. Ghiyath al-Din Khvandamir, *Ma'athir al-Muluk (bih Zamimah-yi Khatamah-yi Khulasat al-Akhbar va Qanun-i Humayuni)*, ed. Mir Hashim Muhaddith (Tehran, 1372), 272.
10. Bafiqi, *Mukhtasar-i Mufid*, 18, 262–63.
11. Iskandar Beg Munshi, *Tarikh-i 'Alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, vol. 3, ed. Muhammad I. Rizvani (Tehran, 1377), 1608.
12. This fateful battle in 1514 was a turning point in early modern warfare, an army of light cavalry using recurved bows and blade being decimated by an army equipped with rifles and cannons.
13. Munshi, *Tarikh-i 'Alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi*, 1608.
14. Amir Mahmud Khvandamir, *Zayl-i Tarikh-i Habib al-Siyar*, ed. Muhammad 'Ali Jarrahi (Tehran, 1991), 209–20. Hasan Beg Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, ed. A. H. Nava'i, vol. 3 (Tehran, 1384), 1289–98; Qazi Ahmad Qumi, *Khulasat al-Tavarikh*, vol. 1, ed. Ihsan Ishraqi (Tehran, 1383), 301–13.
15. Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, 1406.
16. 'Abdi Beg Shirazi, *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, ed. A. H. Nava'i (Tehran, 1369), 94; Khvurshah ibn Qubad al-Husayni, *Tarikh-i Ilchi-i Nizam Shah: Tarikh-i Safaviyah az Aghaz ta Sal-i 972 Hijri Qamari*, ed. Muhammad Reza Nasiri and Koichi Haneda (Tehran: Anjuman-i Athar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2000), 331–32, from Muhammad Qasim Astarabadi's *Tarikh-i Firishtah*. For details of Humayun's sojourn in Iran, see Ray Sukumar, *Humayun in Persia* (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1948).
17. In the ensuing two centuries after Timur's death, the term *Sahib-qiran* (Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction), referring to the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter during which time a world conqueror is born and other momentous events occur, lost its special prestige as more rulers across the Near East and India included the epithet to their royal titles.
18. For a discussion on the Safavid genealogy, see Hani Khafipour's essay in chapter 4 of this volume.
19. Tahmasb Safavi, *Tazkirah-yi Shah Tahmasb*, ed. Karim Fayzi (Qum, 1383), 163–64. For the account of Bayezid's rebellion and escape to the Safavid court, see Zahit Ateil's essay in chapter 5 of this volume.
20. For a fascinating essay on Jahangir's life at court, see Juan R. I. Cole, "The Imagined Embrace: Gender, Identity, and Iranian Ethnicity in Jahangiri Paintings," in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 49–61.
21. Bafiqi, *Mukhtasar-i Mufid*, 262. A typical siege would last months, and food was the most important necessity. The army, having the most power among the besieged

groups to enact violence, had the first chance at securing nourishment, followed by the elite who could afford protection through connections with the army. The rest of the population suffered coercion and unbridled cruelty at the hands of thieves, neighborhood strongmen, and soldiers. Before letting the news of an impending siege reach the ears of Qandaharis, an experienced governor would have had rounded up as many known criminals as he could and tried to be the first to secure all the food storages.

22. Mirza Beg Junabadi, *Rawzat al-Safaviyyah*, ed. Ghulamreza Tabatabai-Majd (Tehran, 1378), 877–78.
23. Junabadi, *Rawzat al-Safaviyyah*, 878.
24. See *Jangnamah-yi Kishm*, ed. Muhammad B. Vuthoqi and A. R. Khayrandish (Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhuhishi-i Mirath-i Maktub, 2005).
25. For an excellent treatment of ‘Abbas’s life and reign in English, see Sholeh Quinn’s *Shah ‘Abbas: The King Who Refashioned Iran* (London: Oneworld, 2015). For Jihangir’s perception of ‘Abbas, see Cole, “The Imagined Embrace.”
26. Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations Between the Mughal Empire and Iran* (Tehran: Iranian Cultural Foundation, 1970); Muzaffar Alam, “Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, c. 1550–1750,” *JESHO* 37, no. 3 (1994): 202–27; N. R. Farooqi, “Diplomacy and Diplomatic Procedure Under the Mughals,” *Medieval History Journal* 7 (April 2004): 59–86; Stephen F. Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Willem Floor, “Commerce vi. From the Safavid through the Qajar Period,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 6, no. 1 (1992): 67–75.
27. Mushi, *Tarikh-i ‘Alam-ara-yi ‘Abbasi*, 3:1571–72, 1777.
28. For Shah Safi’s accession to the Safavid throne, see Sholeh Quinn’s essay in chapter 5 of this volume.
29. ‘Abbas II’s reconquest of the city in 1649 was widely celebrated. The eminent poet of the era, Sai‘b Tabrizi, wrote a eulogy *Qandahar-namah* (*The Tale of Qandahar*) in commemoration of the event. Sa‘ib Tabrizi, *Divan-i Sa‘ib Tabrizi*, ed. Muhammad Qahraman, vol. 6 (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intisharat-i ‘ilmi va Farhangi, 1985–1991), 3602–3608.
30. Starting in Tahmasb’s reign, Safavid historians credited him for reinstating Humayun on the Mughal throne. See, for instance, Khvandamir, *Zayl-i Tarikh-i Habib al-Siyar*, 209. This trend can be seen even after the fall of the Safavids. See, for example, Abu al-Hasan Qazvini, *Favayid al-Safaviyyah*, ed. Maryam Mir-Ahmadi (Tehran, 1367), 4.
31. For a list of governors of Qandahar in the Safavid period, see Mirza Naqi Nasiri, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran: A Third Manual of Safavid Administration by Mirza Naqi Nasiri*, ed. and trans. Willem Floor (Washington, DC: Mage, 2008), 255–57.
32. For instance, see the account of one of Qandahar’s sieges by the chronicler Amir Mahmud Khvandamir, *Zayl-i Tarikh-i Habib al-Siyar*, 172–76.
33. Mirza Muhammad Mar‘ashi Safavi, *Majma‘ al-Tavarikh*, ed. ‘Abbas Iqbal (Tehran, 1362), 51–58; Tadeusz Krusinski Judasz, *The History of the Revolutions of Persia*, vol. 2

- (London, 1728), 3–13. Several Safavid princes declared their sovereignty as shahs after the capital fell, but their claims were short-lived and ineffectual. For a detailed study of the fall of the Safavids, see Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: The Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).
34. ‘Abd al-Husain Nava’i, *Shah ‘Abbas: Majmu‘ah-yi Asnad va Mukatibat-i Tarikhi* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1973), 418–23.
 35. For a number of Safavid-Mughal correspondences during ‘Abbas’s reign, see Nava’i, *Shah ‘Abbas*. For general analyses of Mughal-Safavid relations see Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*.
 36. A reference to a mystical union, these kinds of metaphor are characteristic of the language of Sufism and are widely used in medieval Persianate correspondences.
 37. The term used in the missive is “*sayd-va-shikar*,” which means “to hunt.” The metaphor is often used in medieval and early modern sources to allude to conquest and to give battle to one’s enemy.
 38. For the Safavids, Farah was an important district, en route to Qandahar, located approximately 400 kilometers east of the city.
 39. Referring the Shah ‘Abbas’s sacred descent from Imam ‘Ali, a major legitimating pillar of the Safavid house’s claim to sovereignty.
 40. For details on Zaynal Beg’s mission in which this information is corroborated, see Munshi, *Tarikh-i ‘Alam-ara-yi ‘Abbasi*, 1645–49.

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II. The Ottoman Conquest of Buda(pest)

SULTAN SULEIMAN'S IMPERIAL LETTER OF VICTORY

ZAHIT ATÇIL

From the beginning of the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), expansion into Hungary was a high priority and a point of conflict in Ottoman-Habsburg relations. The capture of Belgrade in 1521 extended the Ottoman frontiers to Hungary, and in the battle of Mohacs in 1526, the Ottoman army had a quick and decisive victory over the Hungarian army. The death of the Hungarian king, Louis II, who had been married to the sister of Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (d. 1558), and his brother, Ferdinand I of Austria (d. 1564), brought the Hungarian monarchy to an end. Initially, the Hungarian diet elected the Voivode of Transylvania, John Zapolyai, to be king, and the Ottoman high council endorsed the decision and recognized Zapolyai as the new king. The Ottoman government preferred to keep Hungary as a vassal state rather than establishing direct rule.

Soon after, however, Hungarian partisans elected Ferdinand as their king, and he quickly marched his forces and occupied the town of Buda, expelling Zapolyai. In response, in 1529, Suleiman annexed the area again and reinstated Zapolyai as the king of Hungary. Two years later Ferdinand seized an opportunity and laid siege to the city. In 1532, the Ottoman sultan, in turn, challenged Ferdinand and Charles V on the battlefield with a massive army. Recognizing the Ottoman's military superiority, Ferdinand and Charles V avoided direct confrontation with the Ottoman army. Although a truce was agreed between the Ottoman government and Ferdinand in 1533, Hungary swung back and forth between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires until the end of the decade.

Wearied by pressure from both Ferdinand and Suleiman, Zapolyai concluded an agreement with Ferdinand in Nagyvarad on February 24, 1538, according to which



FIGURE 6.2

Sultan Suleiman receiving Queen Isabella Jagiellon and the baby Hungarian prince John Zapolyai Sigismund during the conquest of Buda in 1541. The miniature depicts Suleiman reassuring Isabella that her son (nestled in her hands) is appointed voivode of Transylvania for now, and that he could be king of Hungary when he comes of age.

Source: Arifi, *Suleymannâme*. Manuscript housed in Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Hazine 1517, fol. 441a.

Ferdinand recognized the sovereignty of Zapolya in Hungary, but after Zapolyai, the whole kingdom would be transferred to Ferdinand or his heirs; and if Zapolyai, unmarried and already fifty years old at the time, fathered a son, Ferdinand would grant him a small principality. This agreement was initiated upon the advice of Zapolyai's confidante and treasurer, Frater George Martinuzzi (Utiesenovic), the bishop of Nagyvarad. It was also Martinuzzi himself, however, who recommended that Zapolyai marry Isabella, the daughter of Sigismund I, the king of Poland. The wedding was celebrated on March 2, 1539. Isabella was soon declared to be with child. The sudden death of John Zapolyai in 1540 coincided with the birth of his

son, John Sigismund, and once again Hungary was open for competition. The royal claim of a child-prince was supported by the powerful Martinuzzi, as well as by Peter Petrovics (later the count of Temesvar). Martunizzi, in particular, expected that the sultan would support the claim of Zapolyai's son to the throne and appoint him as vicegerent.

At that time, the Ottoman government privileged the nomination of the son as the king of Hungary, but the Hungarian aristocrats had been kept in the dark regarding the Habsburg-Ottoman diplomatic dealings. The Habsburg Ferdinand sent an ambassador, Hieronymus Laski, to Istanbul to inform Sultan Suleiman and his ministers about the agreement of Nagyvarad and to push his claim as the legitimate king of Hungary. A faction of the Hungarian nobility with powerful members, such as Perenyi Peter, who had large territories in the north and the west, also recognized Ferdinand as the king. It was a surprise for the Ottoman court to learn that Zapolyai, to whom the sultan had entrusted the crown of Hungary, had acted treacherously and promised Ferdinand lands "the sultan conquered with his sword." Ultimately, the Ottoman government decided to intervene and resolved the stalemate through force. The sultan and his army entered Buda on September 1, 1541, and established the governorship of Buda. Although the sultan promised to give Prince John Sigismund the throne of Hungary when he grew up, for now he appointed him to rule in Transylvania under the tutelage of Martunizzi and Petrovics.

The result was that Hungary was divided into three parts: Ferdinand occupied one part, John Sigismund and his tutors in Transylvania ruled one part, and the Ottomans established direct administration in the middle territory with Buda as its center. This *de facto* tripartite division of Hungary was not supported by a written agreement, so the stalemate and uncertainty continued. The lands in the north and west of Hungary, occupied by Ferdinand, continued to be a matter of dispute between Ottoman and Habsburg rulers for years to come. Ferdinand, with the support of the Hungarian nobility, launched several sieges to take Buda, but these attempts were unsuccessful due to a strong defense by the governor of Buda. The peace agreement signed in June 1547 finally brought a solution to the Hungarian problem in Ottoman-Habsburg relations that lasted for the next half century.

The document translated here is the sultan's letter to the Doge of Venice, Pietro Lando, announcing the Ottoman conquest of Buda and bringing Hungary under direct Ottoman administration. It discusses why the Ottoman sultan and viziers decided to have another expedition to Hungary and connect its government directly to the capital. Its rhetoric represents a balanced Ottoman ideology compared to the propaganda of Suleiman's early reign. Rather than extolling the qualities and power of the sultan with pompous adjectives and praises, it depicts a more realistic picture of the course of events and presents a more moderate announcement of the Ottoman conquest.¹

This document possesses the general characteristics of other Ottoman *fathnamas* (victory letters). Ottoman *fathnamas* produced by outstanding masters of the arts of composition first appeared in the fifteenth century and continued onward. The

fathnama penned by Molla Gürani for the conquest of Istanbul and sent to Mamluk Sultan Inal was the earliest example of a fathnama that is available today.² Kivami wrote another fathnama in verse describing the achievements of Mehmed II in 1490.³ Many important scholars, historians, and men of chancery were involved in composing announcements of conquests as a way to spread the Ottoman sultan's projection of power.⁴ Although we do not know who the author of this letter is, it most likely was composed by Chancellor Celalzade Mustafa.⁵

TRANSLATION

Sultan Suleiman's Letter to the Doge of Venice, Pietro Lando

When the imperial letter addressed to the Venetian Doge [Pietro Lando], the leader of Christian rulers and the model of Christian nations, the one who arranges the affairs among the Christian people—may God steer him to Islam—, arrives, it should be known that previously the blessings of the conceder of goals descended on [me], with the abundance of my kindness, I had granted the throne of Buda the capital of the country of Hungary that I conquered with the victory bestowing sword, which was at that time far from the Islamic lands and its control was difficult, to King Janos [John Zapolyai] (as he agreed to pay tribute) and then, after his death [July 22, 1540], to his son King Estefan [John Sigismund Zapolyai]. King Ferdinandush [Ferdinand I of Austria] the infidel, who is the king of Austria, a country next to Hungary, who is cursed with unbelief, is full of grudge and sedition by persistently having animosity to the Muslims. As he fell into the dreams of being king to Hungary, with the help of his infidel brother King of Spain Karlo [Charles V] and also with the aids of some other infidels, gathered infidel soldiers from their perverted countries, lined up limitless cannons and arms on the Danube River, invaded Hungary and made the city of Buda his castle, as one of Hungarian noblemen Pereny Petri [Perenyi Peter] also became subservient to him. As for me, I trusted in the blessing of God, the most glorified the loftiest, and resorted to the guidance-marked miracles of the prophet, the master of the worlds and chief of all creatures.

In order to defeat the enemy, I sent courageous and brave vizier Mehmed Pasha—may God keep his loftiness—toward Buda with some gunmen from the Rumeli forces and the Kapıkulu forces accustomed to fight on land and sea. Because solid and durable bridges were necessary for the forces' crossing over the Danube River, one of the most important rivers, and ships were necessary for the provision of foodstuffs to the conquering forces, I sent also Husrev Pasha—may God keep his loftiness. In order to lighten up the torch of religion and affront and insult the perverted unbelievers by unfurling the flag of victory and the banner of conquest, in accordance with the happiness-marked verses written in the Qur'an, the holy honorable book, I followed the examples and traditions of the master of the world, the prophet—may peace be upon him—I headed to fight with my share

of victory and piece of God's help, accompanied by vizier Rüstem Pasha (the leopard of battle castles, the hero of sharks, the sea of courage, and the champion of awe-inspiring fields)—may God elevate him to what He desires—and the governor of Anadolu Suleyman Pasha—may God keep his fortune—and all the helped and country and region conqueror Anadolu governors, all Pleiades-like gallant soldiers of the east and west and the people of my household and devastating gunmen and all my janissary servants.

Successfully, with warriors, I passed through stations and miles, crossed over the bridge built over Sava River located near Belgrade, the well-protected city, and when the dark city of Serem [Sirmium] was about to become auspicious with my flags of conquest, the favorable time for encampment was called, and the uninhabited steppe became a garden in heaven with the imperial army.

At this time, the aforementioned vizier Mehmed Pasha arrived at Buda with an enemy beating and castle conquering group, and then the governor of Rumeli Ahmed Pasha, the lion of battles—may God increase his highness—too arrived there with Rumeli forces. When the infidels—may God abandon them until the Day of Judgment—set up cannons on all sides of the castle, destroyed the towers and ruined by opening breaches everywhere and when the inhabitants became helpless and weak, the auspicious conquest-illuminating forces arrived, and the infidels left the castle and, in order to encounter the helped forces, they built up fortifications (*istabûr*) on a steep hill around Buda and burned the ground along the shores of the Danube. [They then] dug deep trenches and built walls for battle on various locations and towers on some islands on the Danube and set up *becaluskas* [a kind of cannon used in castle sieges]. The felicitous forces of brave soldiers gave no respite and attacked on the unblessed hell-inflicted ones.

The faithless infidels, one by one, jumped out of the trenches and began to escape and turned away on the plain in front of their fortifications. The cannons emit lots of smoke like a revolving dome. As the *gazis*, breaking their entrapments with the strokes of swords continued to fight over forty days day and night, I marched day and night successfully and passed onto the territories of Hungary by crossing over the bridge built with my order on Drava River near the castle of Oszek [today's Osijek, Croatia] and approached Buda about three-four miles. With the screams of the conquering forces, the ground became mud because of the strokes of shoes of animals, and the air became full of silver-color dust from the *gazis'* horses.

The splendor of the kingdom-destroying forces stood victorious where the unblessed lost and had no strength to stand against my chosen army. After sunset on 29 Rabi' al-akhir 948 [August 21, 1541], as the unblessed intended to escape, their ships passed to the city of Pest near Buda; being aware of this, the victorious army attacked the gates of the fortifications at night. When the infidels intended to attack by setting up *becaluskas*, cannons and artilleries in the inside, the *gazis* raided their fortifications, run into inside, all Muslims, infidels, believers and unbelievers were mixed up in the darkness of night, the group of believers were distinguished from the people of hell by the lightning of cannons, the companions of religion were known from the hordes of hellfire by the flames of swords.

The battle and fighting continued until the sunrise, and just as the surface of the world became illuminated with the light of the sun, the limitless blessing of God, the all-provider, appeared; the felicitous army became fortunate; the muscles of my state became powerful in the perfection of force; the victorious army became triumphant over the enemy; the infidels became defeated with a decisive rout; the *gazis* made the rebellious people a prey to the sword and filled the plain of the Danube with the fearful infidels. In an attempt to help their friends, the unbelievers fell off into the Danube River and drowned in the water like the people of the Pharaoh. My ships joined the attack on the river and broke the way of those who intended to cross over to the other side with the victorious swords; a number of men from courageous infidel-defeating forces chased after those who escaped and made the infidels pray to the sword. Several thousands of the armored unblessed men were taken captives.

With the blessing of God and the miracle of the prophet, the pride of the two worlds, the complete victory came upon the people of Islam as [conversely] indignity and vileness came upon the enemy of religion (that is, Islam); the misfortune and malediction were inflicted on the infidels' sense of grandeur. Thank God for this.

On the day I descended to Buda with grandeur, waiting for the announcement of the conquest by the flags of victory, my aforementioned governor of Rumeli and other governors and my servants deemed themselves fortunate by kissing my imperial stirrup. With the banners and standards of regiments that the kings of infidel lands or more correctly of all Europe prepared against the people of belief and inverted and broken drums seemingly and their bands, they were raided and tied in chains in groups and tramped down under the horses of victorious forces.

As I entered into my imperial tent, rejected bodies of the captives from the people of hell were cleaned from the surface of the world by the swords of the valorous conquerors. My main objective was to turn the throne of Buda into a *dar al-Islam* [land of Islam] and control the country of Hungary with my victorious sword. With the blessing of God, as the unruly enemy has been repelled, the son of King Janos of Buda [John Sigismund Zapolyai] was appointed as the Voivode of Erdel [that is, Transylvania], which was his father's homeland, and he was sent there on the condition that he would pay a sum amount as tribute to the imperial treasury. I granted governorships to a few loyal nobles of Hungary.

I annexed the city of Buda and its vicinity and turned most of its churches into mosques for the people of belief. Together with all *gazis*, we prayed the Friday prayer in which the sermon was preached on my felicitous name. I adorned the lands that had been filled with the dongs of bell with the prophet's caller to prayer and the beautiful melodies of Muhammad—may peace be upon him. I secured all the castles and territories in Hungary with their dependent vicinities and their subjects to my well-protected domain, and appointed judges, wardens, guards. For defense, I selected some auspicious forces from the conquering army and appointed my vizier Suleiman Pasha, the carrier of Asaph's [the vizier of prophet Solomon] conscience—may God keep his highness. Meanwhile, the sinister king [that is, Ferdinand of Austria] and the Polish king sent several ambassadors to my lofty

threshold and pleaded and apologized to my throne where the world takes refuge. They acquiesced to pay tribute.

With the lofty blessings of God, the beautiful conquests that were granted to my state this time has never been granted to anybody. All my blessed wishes became apparent with precision accordingly. I left Buda with health and booty with my land-conquering army and headed toward my felicitous capital. If God wishes, may those lands be deemed to be auspicious by the shadows of my flags of conquest. Be that as it may, in order to announce these conquests, I sent one of the imperial servants, Murad, the model of his peers and associates—may God increase his capacity. Once he arrives and announce [the victory] hopefully you arrange celebrations and festivities.

Know that you trust my imperial seal. It is scribed in early Jumada al-akhir 948 [September 22–October 1, 1541] in Oszek [now Osijek, Croatia].

NOTES

1. M. Tayyib Gokbilgin, “Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu ve Bizimle İlgili Diğer Belgeler,” *Belgeler* 5–6, no. 9–12 (1968–71): 1–151. The missive is housed in Archivio di Stato di Venezia [Venetian State Archives] among the collections of *Documenti Turchi* [Turkish Documents] (Busta 4, no. 463). Its Italian translation is also kept in the same collection (Busta 4, no. 464). M. Tayyib Gokbilgin published the document in the original Arabic.
2. Ahmet Ates, “İstanbul’un fethinde dair Fatih Sultan Mehmed tarafından gönderilen mektublar ve bunlara gelen cevaplar,” *Tarih Dergisi* 4, no. 7 (1953): 11–50.
3. First, Franz Babinger published this *fathnama* (see Kivami, *Fetihname-i Sultan Mehmed*, Istanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1955) and later Ceyhun Vedat Uygur prepared this for publication again (see Kivami, *Fetihname*, Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007).
4. In addition to Molla Gurani and Kivami, İdris-i Bidlisi composed a *fathnama* after Selim I’s annexation of Egypt, and Matrakçı Nasuh wrote a *fathnama* for the conquest of Moldavia (Bogdan). See Hasan Aksoy, “Fetihname,” *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi* 12 (1988–2013): 470–72.
5. See Celalzade’s role in the Ottoman chancery in Kaya Sahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Suleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

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III. The Mughal Conquest of Chittor

STUDY OF AKBAR'S LETTER OF VICTORY

TAYMIYA R. ZAMAN

Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the grandson of the founder of the Mughal Empire, Babur (d. 1530), became king at the age of thirteen. Over the course of his reign, he consolidated Mughal rule over North India by embarking on an ambitious program of conquest that absorbed a number of regional kingdoms into the Mughal Empire. To counter the power of the Central Asian nobility, some of whom had come to India with Babur, Akbar actively recruited the Hindu Rajput warrior elite through both diplomacy and military force. His ties to the Rajputs included marrying Rajput women, awarding military ranks to Rajput noblemen and their kin, and eventually constructing himself as a “Muslim Rajput” who was portrayed in Rajput bardic traditions as the Hindu god Ram.¹

Akbar's interest in religion extended to all faith communities. In 1575, he set up the House of Worship, a place where debates between scholars of different religious traditions were held late at night and tenets of each religion were questioned. To quell resistance from Muslim religious scholars, Akbar declared himself the *mujtahid* of the age. This move, formalized through an imperial decree in 1579, gave Akbar supreme authority on all matters of religious doctrine. Ten years later Akbar commissioned the grand imperial history known as the *Akbarnama*, which was completed by Akbar's historian and trusted adviser Abu'l Fazl in 1598. The *Akbarnama* traced Akbar's genealogy from Adam, claimed that the race of Mughals was descended from a Mongol princess, Alanqua, who was impregnated by a ray of light, and heralded Akbar as a universal sovereign ushering in a new millennium. Akbar's *Din-i Ilahi*, a private circle of discipleship, which bound his men to him



FIGURE 6.3 *Akbar and Jaimal*

An illustration from the *Akbarnama* of the siege of the Rajasthani fortress of Chittor in 1568. The miniature depicts Mughal emperor Akbar (*upper right*) shooting and killing the famed Rajput warrior Jaimal (*upper left*). The defenders are then overwhelmed by the Mughals and the fortress falls.

Source: *Akbarnama*

Date: c. 1590–1895

Place of origin: Attributed to Lahore, India

Credit: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. IS.2:68-1896

as both disciples and soldiers, reinforced his messianic and charismatic claims to power while cementing bonds within his inner circle. His policy of *Sulh-i Kul* (Universal Peace) pointed to an imperial strategy for integrating multiple ethnic and religious groups into the empire.²

Akbar's ties to the Rajputs and his multiethnic and multireligious court have meant that he is romanticized in popular consciousness in India as tolerant and secular. Both these characterizations are a projection of present anxieties onto the past. For one, tolerance was not an ideological concern among premodern kings. Rather, successful kings maintained local institutions and practices in order to ensure a reasonably contented populace; simultaneously, kings asserted dominance by demanding tributes and allegiance and declaring war when necessary. Second, there was no such thing as secular kingship in premodern India; every king invoked a divine lineage and relied upon signs of favor from God to legitimize his sovereignty. The vocabulary of kingship took on different shades depending on the exigencies facing the king: Akbar could be both *khalifa* (caliph) and Hindu god Ram.³ The *Fathnama-i Chittor*, issued following Akbar's conquest of a significant Rajput stronghold in February 1568, must be read in this light.

NOTES ON *FATHNAMA-I CHITTOR*

A *fathnama* is a formal proclamation or letter of victory issued in the name of the king and distributed across the empire. Usually penned by a *munshi* (scribe or secretary), fathnamas follow highly stylized and formulaic conventions.⁴ Unlike official histories such as the *Akbarnama*, which was closely supervised by Akbar, the degree to which Akbar was involved in the penning of this text is unclear, and the name of the munshi who penned it unknown.⁵ The *Fathnama-i Chittor* is arranged according to standard convention: It begins with praises for God, continues by honoring the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, praises the king, explains the reason for the imperial assault on Chittor and then describes the successful military engagement that followed. The *Fathnama* closes with a request that subjects pray for the king, who is divinely favored.

In style, the document mirrors the *fathnama* penned by Shaykh Zayn Khwafi (Babur's *sadr* or minister for religious affairs) on Babur's victory over the Rajput Rana Sanga (r. 1508–1527) of Mewar, at the battle of Khanwa in 1527.⁶ Rana Sanga and Babur had initially been allied against Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi of the Delhi Sultanate, but following Babur's defeat of Lodhi, Rana Sanga and Babur's ambitions had brought them into conflict. Shaykh Zayn's *fathnama*, included in Babur's autobiography, begins with the opening lines of the Prophet Muhammad's sermon on the conquest of Mecca and depicts Babur's victory over Rana Sanga through images of Muslim warfare against an infidel force. Akbar's victory over Rana Sanga's son, Udai Singh (r. 1540–1572), at Chittor in 1568 is depicted in the same manner: The *Fathnama-i Chittor* closely follows Shaykh Zayn's introduction and relies heavily

on copious citations of verses from the Qur'an. In the *Akbarnama*, the tone through which the conquest is depicted is less strident; Akbar subdues the wrongdoers, but Qur'anic references to early Islamic history are not set as precedents to Akbar's triumph.⁷ This points to how the *Fathnama-i Chittor* is indicative of the early days of Akbar's kingship, when his imperial image had not yet taken on the form for which he is now known. Ironically, Akbar's defeat of the Rajputs and their integration into his empire directly contributed to favorable religious policies toward Hindus that were adopted by Akbar in later years, and to Akbar's fashioning as a sacred symbol who could be likened to a Hindu god.

The *Fathnama-i Chittor*, along with its forceful assertions of Muslim supremacy through appeals to the Qur'an, also draws upon poetry from well-known Persian poets Sa'di (d. 1292) and Nizami (d. 1209). Praises to God in the opening section begin with verses from the Qur'an that are followed with verses from Sa'di. Praises for the Prophet Muhammad begin with Qur'anic injunctions to strive against hypocrites and infidels, and conclude with mystical verses from Nizami that portray the Prophet as having divine powers that allow him to grant victory to those he wishes. A number of verses of unknown origin are scattered throughout the *Fathnama*, including verses that praise the otherworldly grandeur of the fortress Akbar's forces would besiege and verses that contain imagery of legendary pre-Islamic heroes. Many motifs are in operation here: Akbar is fighting a just war, much in the way of the early Muslims; the Rana is punished for his false pride; and submitting to Akbar is the same as submitting to God because Akbar has been entrusted by God to keep a community of devout believers safe. Simultaneously, by invoking the mythical warriors of Persianate romances, the *Fathnama* turns Akbar and his heroic army into protagonists in a literary drama.

Despite their divergences, Akbar is portrayed in both the *Fathnama-i Chittor* and the *Akbarnama* as a champion favored by the divine, even as the meaning and expressions of divine charisma would change over the course of Akbar's reign. When read in conjunction with other texts, the *Fathnama-i Chittor* adds another layer to the many faces of Akbar. The *Fathnama* is evidence of an older vocabulary of kingship that Akbar would largely leave behind; at the same time, the idiom of kingship evident in the *Fathnama* can still be read as a necessary stage of the king's evolution.

TRANSLATION

Fathnama-i Chittor

All praise is due to God, who has made true His promise, aided His servant, honored His soldiery, and vanquished the confederates alone for there is nothing after God.⁸ Tribute and gratitude are due to the Great Conqueror by whose merit sultans

steadfast in religious adherence and justice are given keys to the seizure of forts and the conquest of lands. His royal decree and favor adorn the *khilafat* of the victorious khans.⁹ The Merciful One has promised the faithful: "It is Our duty to help believers" [Q. 30:47]. By elevating the power of God, the thunderbolt swords of the noble mujahidin have subdued the rebellious infidels for the order is: "Fight them! God will punish them at your hands, bring them to disgrace, and give you victory over them" [Q. 9:14]. Regarding this:

God crowns the head of one and offers him the throne.
Another He hurls from the throne to the ground.
He decorates one's head with prosperity's cap,
but fills another's chest with adversity's threadbare rug.
He turns burning fire into a garden of flowers for His friend.
He sends His enemies to eternal punishment through the Nile's
waters.¹⁰

God is exalted and they say His sovereign power over His kingdom is dependent on neither friend nor helper. Benediction will reach mankind in acknowledgment of the command, "Oh Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be firm against them" [Q. 9:73], which by the grace of the Sovereign, heralds the raised flag of faith, the bowed heads of tribes and clans, the conquered forts, the triumphant soldiers, for "God sent down soldiers whom you did not see" [Q. 9:26]. A great leader is one to whom conquest is granted with ease. The prosperity of his kingdom is assured eternally, and his noble intentions and pure devotion are in the creed (*kalima*) uttered by his tongue: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet." Every short-sighted crow that becomes blind to the blessings of the hereafter for the sake of the firewood of this world goes down the path of ignorance and becomes the target of the arrow of the raging fire of hell and its painful punishment.

The Messenger is he who, without laying claim to throne or crown,
extracts tributes from the greatest of emperors.
I was wrong in referring to him as the king whose throne is the pinnacle
of creation.
For he is the one who both bestows crowns and seizes thrones.
His body is intimate with the throne of the heavens.
His head is crowned with the crown of God's praise:
"If it were not for you, I would not have created the heavens and what
lies beneath!"¹¹

Until the day of judgment, may God bless and be pleased with the noble group that comprises the family of the Prophet, his exalted Companions, the army of his

upright friends who led the arrayed lines of the faithful in prayer and were guides to those who were true. After these preliminaries:

In view of His statement [to Adam], “I have made you a leader for mankind” [Q. 2:124], the King of Kings, great in His majesty and bountiful in His gifts, has turned over to us the kingship of the provinces of Hindustan, which comprise some of the vastest climes of the world. The scribe of the celestial mandate has emblazoned the throne of our *khilafat* with the proclamation [of God to David], “Indeed, We established him upon the earth” [Q. 18:84] that is further bejeweled with “That is God’s bounty; He grants it to whom He wishes” [Q. 62:4]. The truth is that all creation, which is evidence of the wonder that is the Creator’s trust, has found sanctuary in His guarantee of protection from the unpleasant events of days and the hardships of time. Ensconced in His grace and mercy, subjects who are devout and obedient busy themselves in duties of worship owed to the Most High. We consider it necessary and incumbent and a required debt for one with high aspirations to be forever thankful for the blessing [of kingship] and to sing praises for this great gift.¹² In accordance with, “Direct your attention wherever you wish, for you are victorious,”¹³ wherever we direct our attention, sovereignty and fortune come to welcome us and to whichever realm we incline the rein of our firm resolution, victory and conquest rush to our presence. “This is from the favor of my Lord, to test whether I will be grateful or ungrateful” [Q. 27:40].

By virtue of these auspicious tidings, “Strive in the cause of God, so that you may succeed” [Q. 5:35], we are engaged to the best of our abilities in jihad and we have been blessed by His incomparable favor, for He has strengthened and expanded our kingdom. And so we subdue forts, localities, and provinces in possession of the infidels—may God forsake them!—and over all these we raise the felicitous banners of Islam. With their burnished, bloody swords, our fighters avenge themselves like Bahram, and their arrows fly like shooting stars that bear the tidings of destiny, namely, to erase the darkness of idolatry and the signs of injustice from the surfaces of the hearts of the unbelievers and from the foundations of every place of idol-worship in India. “Praise God, who has guided us, for we would never have had guidance if it were not for God” [Q. 7:43].¹⁴

The substance of this discourse is such that after the killing of Ali Quli and his wretched faction, we arrived at the *khilafat* of Agra “righteous and victorious” [Q. 80:16],¹⁵ and as our noble command sought to increase the materials needed for our pastime of hunting elephants, we encamped within the borders of Sawi Subar and Gagrion, which are attached to the principality of Chittor.¹⁶ Around this time, the news reached our royal attention that Rana Udai Singh (may God destroy him), contrary to the proper conduct of welcoming, paying respects to, and kissing the royal threshold, or at the very least sending his son with a tribute in his stead, had adopted an attitude of unseemly pride and insubordination. He had taken sanctuary in the fortress of Chittor, which is his hereditary place of refuge and one of the strongest and grandest forts of Hindustan, and he was collecting provisions for war. Because thoughts of jihad were casting their reflections at

the gleaming mirror of our conscience at this time, flames of ardor for the divine religion (*Din-i Ilahi*), coupled with the fires of anger, arose in our royal countenance.¹⁷ Although most of our soldiers had returned to their assigned lands following their most recent victory, and only a handful of soldiers accompanied us on our hunting expedition, we nonetheless turned our attention to defeating the infidels in the fortress.

When news reached Udai Singh, he turned fearful and left behind (at the fortress) his uncle Sahidas, and Jaimal and Udaiban,¹⁸ all of whom are celebrated for their bravery among the infidels (God destroy and punish them), and each is known to possess the manliness and valor of a thousand mounted horsemen. With them were five thousand of their chosen Rajputs, ten thousand soldiers stationed to defend the fortress, along with a thousand troops from the Rana's own contingent.¹⁹ Meanwhile Udai Singh hastened with his troops to Udaipur and Kumbalmer,²⁰ which are securely placed between mountains and jungles. When we were at the town of Rampur, which is a well-known town attached to Chittor, the plans of the infidel became clear to us. Our royal mind determined that our soldiers must, with divine aid, first subjugate the fortress, after which we would act upon circumstances as they presented themselves. With this intention, as the star of fortune rose over the horizon, our royal presence descended upon the fortress of Chittor on Thursday, twentieth Rabi-us-Sani [October 24, 1567]. The majestic fortress appeared such that the mountain of Burz²¹ would appear smaller than a pebble in its lap and the Hindu Kush would fit within its walls. The height of its ramparts competes with the celestial spheres (*falak-i atlas*) themselves,²² the sun appears to orbit around these ramparts and so vast are they that the sun is unable to complete its journey. Those who can place a measure on the worth of an era are speechless with wonder at the quality of the earth from which these towers rise. The circumference of the fortress measures around three *farsangs* and its battlements are impossible to calculate.²³

The engineers are the ones who have built this fort
 But the Creator of stone has laid its foundation
 At His feet lie both stone and sky
 In His structures are placed a hundred Alexanders
 And from those small inklings that are mere traps,
 come the bold thoughts of those who know.
 The walls He builds reach the zenith of the sky
 The path reaches its conclusion when traversed by the king's armies.²⁴

Any prudent, intelligent person would reckon that capturing this fort would be an impossible task.

When accompanied by the generosity of the Magnificent, and with the spiritual aid of the perfect friends of God, in every direction that we turned our face, we found what we were seeking.²⁵

The same day we inspected the fort from all sides with a view to gaining the utmost knowledge of it, and we designated responsibilities to the courageous khans, the dignified sultans, the amirs blessed under the fortunate conjunction and all the other obedient servants betrothed to our lofty service. Warriors who travel over mountain and countryside, their hearts and lives given over to the call of jihad and martyrdom to secure their rewards in this life and the next asked our leave to take the fortress with divine aid, to storm its fortifications with their lion-like strength, and to bring it into our possession.

The vexatious ones gathered inside the fortress had collected a large quantity of weapons with which to defend the fort; with them were mortars, cannons, matchlocks, catapults, carriages to transport heavy loads, gunpowder, and arrows, all of which would last out thirty years of continued deployment. Because they were full of confidence in their fort, weapons, and military prowess, and we did not wish for our fearless army of Islam (may God protect them until the day of judgment) to play on their lives needlessly, we sent for our dragon-like cannons and mortars, and for the artillery we had left at the capital. We ordered that mountain-breaking cannons and mortars be produced at our encampment, tunnels be dug, and a covered passage be made, which would allow us to enter the fort using a battering ram, following which we would launch an attack. We ordered one of our contingents to attack, kill, and take captive men of the army of Udai Singh who had stayed behind while he was sitting ten *kos* away from here, and we dispatched another battalion to plunder Rampur, from which they returned with a large quantity of booty after sending the infidels to their doom.²⁶ After the artillery arrived and the covered passage was complete, we exploded our mines, set fire to their towers and battlements, and ordered our soldiers to surround the fort completely.

That sect of people destined for hell had now experienced the strength of the armies of Islam and become aware of the misplaced pride of their ruler. Faced with their own impotence, their chiefs came out of the fort to plead for respite and intercession. Despite subjecting nobles and the commoners among the community of Islam to many dangers, including gunfire, besiegement, and catapulting stones, through which some had been martyred, they offered us terms whose acceptance would have compromised our dignity. We gave them permission to return. The next day we went ourselves by the covered passage to meet Muhammad Qasim Khan Mir-i Bahr who was stationed closest to the fort and commanded that the great battle (*Jang-i Sultani*) be launched. The soldiers bound to the glad fortunes of Islam are steadfast in the credo: "Allah is sufficient for us and He is our protector" [Q. 3:173], and they showed great audacity and courage on the battlefield. Within (the fort), the infidels, who had the character of Jews, had set ablaze the fire of war by lighting up their fire-raining catapults and thundering cannons in fierce competition. The lions of the thicket of bravery and the leopards of the summit of grandeur were such in

their manliness that their hands seized the belt of Orion and snatched away the crown of Bahram.

The conditions of man's being are all in their place.
The heads of men's enemies lie at their feet.
The cup in Jamshid's gathering is theirs,²⁷
And theirs is the garland of Bahram.

These days on the battlefield give rise to all kinds of clamor, such that a voice twists its way into the mountain of *Qaf*:²⁸

The enemies you perceive to be a firm mountain,
Are only fragments trapped in amber.²⁹

In accordance with God's command, "Gather against them what forces you are able" [Q. 8:60], the troops outdid one another in contest and together they stormed the parapet and towers battered by cannon-fire. There, the gathered crowds scattered like pigs hit by arrows, and the crowd gave way to the swords of the royal army. From every corner thundered cannon-fire and the sound of catapults, and every nerve and sinew quaked at the wrath of the conquering heroes, which overthrew the enemies and scorched the harvest of their deeds.

The fire of vengeance catches left and right,
as dust flies on the earth and sparks fly in the sky.
The armies of the enemy are all agitated,
in the manner of those who inhabit the fires of hell.
The smoke from the fire of the guns of war,
is akin to the many-colored rainbow.³⁰

The two sides fought incessantly for three nights and days. Like foxes, the enemy contrived deceptive schemes, and like lions, the royal army thwarted their every move.

Finally, on the night of Tuesday, twenty-fifth Shaban, 975 A.H. [February 23, 1568], in accordance with, "(The unbelievers) will not be able to avert the fire from their faces, nor from their backs, and no help shall reach them" [Q. 21:39], the raging balls of fire in the sky and the sound of cannons escalated, "For it will come upon them unexpectedly and they will be confounded, with no power to repel it and no respite at hand" [Q. 21:40], and they had no strength left to defend themselves. In this fortunate circumstance, the hidden call, "If you help God, He will help you and make your foothold strong" [Q. 47:7], reached the exalted hearing, and with each passing moment, the Divine Inspirer revealed the good tidings, "Surely, the help of God is near" [Q. 2:214]. Now the vengeful fighters, gifted in wielding

daggers and drenched in the blood of their enemies, launched a glorious attack in which they seized the planks the wretched ones had put up to block the breaches. On seeing this, Jaimal, who was one of the three chiefs who had been entrusted with guarding the fortress and who had kept it within his sights from beginning to end, led a contingent of men to defend the breach. Jaimal and the men with him could be seen from a distance through flashes of gunfire that his wretched faction was firing in successive shots. We ourselves were present in the battlefield during these three days, fighting with arrows and muskets. Jaimal was destined to perish in hell at our truth-worshipping hands as the order goes: "Whatever God wills, He provides its means." When he came into sight, our matchlock was fat and ready in our hands and we shot the worthless infidel in the forehead, heeding the call, "Wherever you may be, death will take you, even if you are in fortified towers" [Q. 4:78], and so dispatched him to hell.

Disorder now spread through the herd; at every level, there was confusion. Some of the chiefs kept fighting but they could not push back the brave warriors from the breaches. At the rising of dawn, the archers, skilled to the point where they could shoot an arrow at an ant's eye in the dark, and the lancers, magicians whose spears could target specks of dust on the ground, pushed toward the entry of the fort using a line of elephants. Through a glorious show of strength, courage, and manliness, they forced their way into the fort and began fighting with arrows and lances.

Like the eyebrows of the beautiful, the bow spread disorder
in every corner of the world.
Like the beloved's eyelashes, the flying arrow spread chaos
in the lives of many.
Blood fills the shields of warriors the way the blood of the heart
gathers in the skirts of lovers.
Blood has rendered the warriors' golden belts tulip-colored.
Heroes stand waist-deep in the river of blood.
Like rain that falls from the clouds that appear in the spring,
Tears of blood drop from the eyes.³¹

The hand of destiny had covered the eyes and intellect of those straying, arrogant ones and brought them to adversity for, "In reckoning there would be no punishment they willfully became blind and deaf" [Q. 5:71], and they were obstructed for "They could not continue on and nor could they turn back" [Q. 36:67]. The prayer on the tongues of the believers was, "Our Lord, bestow patience upon us and make our foothold strong and give us victory over the disbelievers" [Q. 2:250] and from the heavens descended the refreshing message, "Help from God and imminent victory is at hand; give glad tidings to the believers" [Q. 61:13]. The royal army, staunch in purpose, swooped on the rebellious infidels in droves

and captured the breach. The bodies of the enemies fell in heaps to bloodthirsty swords and flying arrows. Those who had remained ran in all directions, “as if they were alarmed donkeys fleeing from a lion” [Q. 74:50–51] until they too fell to the point of a spear that returned them to the dregs from which they came. The star of conquest rose over the horizon, to herald that, “Victory comes only with God’s providence, for God is wise, all-powerful” [Q. 8:10], and the victorious army entered the fort. In dutiful obedience to the command, “And kill the unbelievers together” [Q. 9:36],³² the unruly ones clustered in groups of two or three hundred men were killed and their women and children taken captive. In accordance with, “God has promised you abundant spoils of war which you will take” [Q. 48:20], uncountable goods and treasures fell into the hands of the army. “So the roots of the people who committed wrong were cut off. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds” [Q. 6:45].

The vessel of nobility, the pillar and support of throne and kingdom *Asad-ad-Daulah*,³³ trustworthy servant of the resplendent *khilafat*, glorious leader of the khans of the age, elevated, peerless statesman, pure, self-sacrificing one of virtuous intent, fearless horseman, adorer of the ranks of bravery, Mubarizuddin, Mir Muhammad Khan Bahadur and the vessel of nobility, the pillar and support of throne and kingdom *Asad-ad-Daulah*, the purest of the nobles of the age, deserving of confidence and favor, the horseman in the field of endeavor and bravery, Qutbuddin Muhammad Khan Bahadur and all the other noble khans, sultans, and sayyids under the good influence of the stars, the great ‘*ulama*’, shaykhs, *mashaikhs*, and qazis, lords and peasants, *Chaudhris*, *Qanungus*, and commoners of Sarkar Punjab, men at all levels and stages should rejoice in this *Fathnama* that points the way to future victories.³⁴ In the auspicious hours, when prayers are granted, they should bow down in gratitude in the name of the noble king and pray for the longevity and prosperity of his kingdom, pray that he will be given favor and guidance in the path of jihad and increase in his enthusiasm for charity and benevolence, and know that day after day, new doors to conquest and victory will open for us. After settling the affairs of the province of Chittor, we have inclined the reins of our determination in the direction of the *khilafat* of Agra.

The horse beneath, and the canopy of victory overhead
Conquest and good fortune ahead and behind, divine help the guide.³⁵

By the will of God, in a few days, our royal presence will arrive at the seat of the *khilafat*. The pillar of the kingdom knows that our noble intentions are directed towards the ordering of his affairs and guaranteeing the peace and security of our subjects. Should he wish to apprise us of events and conditions, he may do so, and should he wish to submit a request to us, he should do so in order that we may grant it. Written by royal order, to be obeyed for all time, at Ajmer on tenth Ramadan, 975 AH (March 9, 1568).

NOTES

1. John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (1993; repr., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23–24. See also Cynthia Talbot, “Justifying Defeat: A Rajput Perspective on the Age of Akbar,” *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 55, no. 2–3 (2012): 329–68; and Audrey Truschke, “Setting the Record Wrong: A Sanskrit Version of Mughal Conquests,” *South Asian History and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2012): 373–96.
2. For Akbar’s religious policy and its formulations, see A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sainthood and Sacred Kingship in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 131–52. See also Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 44–47.
3. Richards writes that the title of *khalifa* was part of Akbar’s imperial decree of 1579. See Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 39–40.
4. For more on munshis and statecraft, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Making of a Munshi,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 61–72.
5. This essay uses the text of the *Fathnama* in Ishtiyak Ahmad Zilli ed., *The Mughal State and Culture 1556–1598: Selected Letters and Documents from Munshaat-i-Namakin* (Delhi: Manohar, 2007), 7–18. The volume also contains a partial, annotated translation of the *Fathnama* and a discussion of the *Fathnama* in its historical context. From here on, I will refer to Zilli’s transcription of the *Fathnama* in Persian as “*Fathnama*,” to Zilli’s translation of the *Fathnama* as “*Fathnama* (trans.),” and to Zilli’s discussion of the *Fathnama* as “Zilli, *Munshaat*.”
6. See Zilli, *Munshaat*, 60–61. For more on Shaykh Zain’s *Fathnama*, see Stephen Dale, *The Garden of the Eight Paradises: Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India, 1483–1530* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 347–50.
7. For the *Akbarnama*’s account of the conquest of Chittor, see Abu’l Fazl ibn Mubarak, *Akbarnama*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897), 441–80.
8. This is the opening line of the Prophet Muhammad’s conquest of Mecca. See *Fathnama* (trans.), 356n3.
9. I have deliberately left *khilafat* untranslated. “Caliphate” in English refers to a distinct, hegemonic entity ruled by one caliph; however, the contextual meaning of the term here has to do with stewardship.
10. These verses are derived from the prologue of Sa’di’s *Bustan* (The Orchard), which consists of philosophical reflections on worldly and mystical themes. Widely read, recited, and revered in the Persianate world, Sa’di (d. 1292) is invoked here to supplement verses from the Qur’an that praise the glory of God. See Sa’di Shirazi, *Bustan*, ed. Nur Allah Iranparast (Tehran: Danish, 1973).
11. The verses quoted in praise of the Prophet are from Nizami’s *Iskandarnama* (The Book of Alexander). Nizami (d. 1209) is known for his romantic, epic poetry and the *Iskandarnama* is part of a Persianate tradition in which Alexander (or Iskandar) was cast as an idealized hero, king, and sage. See Nizami Ganjavi, *Iskandarnama*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: *Bunghah-i Tarjuma wa Nashr-i Kitab*, 1964). The saying quoted at the end of

my translation and attributed to the Prophet Muhammad is referred to through a synecdoche, namely, “*law laka*” in Nizami’s original. See *Fathnama*, 8. I have chosen to quote the saying in full. For a reference to this saying, see Badi’-az-Zaman Furuzanfar, *Ahadith-i Mathnawi* (Tehran: Intisarati Danisgah-i Tihiran, 1955), 172. I am grateful to Ahmet Karamustafa for providing me with this reference.

12. Kingship is a blessing conferred upon Akbar so that he can ensure the safety of devout subjects who worship God.
13. Some hadith reports describe the Prophet as having a “seal” on his back between his shoulder blades. It is described as an elevated piece of flesh. Beyond that there are varied descriptions of its detailed appearance. Abu al-Khattab (Ibn Dihyah) Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Faraj (548–633) wrote a book, *al-Tanwir fi Mawlid al-Bashir wa ‘l-Nadhir*, in which he narrated a hadith through a chain of narration going through al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, which described this seal as having written upon it *tawajjah haythu shi’ta fa’immaka mansur* “go whither you wish, for you will be victorious.” For references to this book, see ‘Abd Allah ibn Yusuf Zayla’i, *Nasb al-rayah takhrij ahadith al-Hidayah, ma’a al-Hidayah sharh Bidayat al-mubtadi lil-Marghinani, wa-yalihi fi akhir al-mujallad al-khamis Munyat al-alma’i fima fata al-Zayla’i li-Ibn Qutlubugha*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1996), 278, and Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa l-nihayah*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1988), 41. I am grateful to Ghassan Abdul Jabbar for these references.
14. Bahram is the literary character Bahram Gur, who features in a number of Persian epics and romances, including Nizami’s *Haft Paykar*, an allegorical story about a king’s spiritual quest, and in Firdaws’s *Shahnameh*, an epic of the kings of Iran that ends with the Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century CE. Bahram is depicted in both as a warrior-king with a love of hunting and is loosely based on the historical Sassanid king, Bahram V (r. 420–438 CE).
15. For more primary sources that mention the rebellion of Ali Quli against Akbar, see *Fathnama* (trans.), 357n13.
16. Chittorgarh (present-day term) is approximately 300 miles from Agra.
17. *Din-i ilahi*, where *din* refers to faith, path, or submission and *ilahi* to divinity, has come to be known as a religion invented by Akbar. However, as explained in the introduction, *Din-i-Ilahi* is better understood as a circle of discipleship around the sacred figure of Akbar. The use of the term in this document is interesting; it could be used as an adjective to describe Islam, literally as “the divine faith” while also being used interchangeably with Islam. The play on words here would be similar to Akbar’s minting of coins that had on them the phrase “*Allahu Akbar*,” that is, God (Allah) is Great (Akbar).
18. For more on the names of the soldiers present, see *Fathnama* (trans.), 357n21.
19. For more on the actual number of soldiers who may have been present, see *Fathnama* (trans.), 357n22.
20. Zilli writes that Kombalmir is the same as Kumbhalgarh, a fortress about forty miles north of Udaipur city today. See *Fathnama* (trans.), 358n23.
21. Alborz is a mountain range in northern Iran.

22. Islamicate thought divided the universe into nine celestial spheres; *falak-i atlas* (or *falak-i aflak*, that is, the sphere of spheres) was believed to be a starless firmament that enclosed the other eight. See Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought, A New Persian Edition and English Translation of Nasir al-Din Tusi's Rauda-yi Taslim*, ed. and trans. E. D. Badakhchani (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 21–2.
23. A *farsang* was an ancient Persian unit of measurement and would be approximately four miles. For more on the measurements of the fort, see *Fathnama* (trans.), 358n28.
24. I have been unable to find the origin of these verses.
25. I have been unable to find the origin of these verses.
26. A *kos* was an Indian unit of measurement that could be anything between one and three miles.
27. In Persian mythology, the cup of the legendary king Jamshid is depicted as a vehicle for divination that holds within it the elixir of eternal life and perfect knowledge. The pre-Islamic figure of Jamshid was incorporated into Islamicate mystical imagery. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1972), 33–34.
28. In Islamicate cosmology, *Qaf* is a mythical mountain range that surrounds the earth. See Henry Corbin and Ruth Horine, *Mundus Imaginalis, Or, The Imaginary and the Imaginal* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1976).
29. I have been unable to find the origin of these verses.
30. *Qaws-i quzah-i rang rang*. Quzah is the pre-Islamic god who governed the weather, so “*qaws-i quzah* translates as the bow of the angel of the clouds, or rainbow. For original, see *Fathnama*, 14. I have been unable to find the origin of these verses.
31. I have been unable to find the origin of these verses.
32. I concur with Zilli that this is quoted incorrectly and that the correct quote is most likely: “And fight the disbelievers collectively, as they fight you collectively.” See *Fathnama*, 17n4.
33. Honorific title that translates to “Lion of the State.”
34. *Mashaikh* refers to a man of spiritual learning, *Chaudhri* is a hereditary title bestowed on landowners, and *Qanungu* refers to jurists or lawmakers.
35. I have been unable to find the origin of these verses.

FURTHER READING

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PART III. Philosophical Inquiries



FIGURE 7.1 *A Nighttime Gathering*

The Safavid miniaturist Muhammad Zaman depicts here two unnamed scholars in conversation by candlelight as a comet streaks across the night sky above the gathering. Art historians speculate that this might be the first illustration of one of two recorded comets sighted in the northern hemisphere in December 1664 and April 1665. It is uncertain whether Muhammad Zaman created the painting in Iran for the Safavid ruler 'Abbas II or in India for Mughal emperor Aurangzeb given its conspicuous Mughal stylistic elements.

Source: Illustrated album leaf, folio from the Davis Album

Artist: Muhammad Zaman (active 1649–1700)

Date: 1664–1865

Place of origin: Isfahan, Iran

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915. 30.95.174.2

7. Philosophy as a Way of Life

The philosophical traditions in lands controlled by Muslim rulers come into their own in the early modern period. Most notably in the writings of the Persian philosophers, we notice a small but significant shift toward a new conceptualization of philosophy as a way of life. Classical topics such as establishing the existence of God, or “the necessary being” in philosophical inquiries, remain central to the overall formulation of philosophical discourse in the early modern period.

Although it is problematic, at least at this stage in the state of our scholarship, to speak of a philosophical tradition delineated primarily by confessional commitments, the two figures discussed in the first two essays in this chapter, Mulla Sadra Shirazi and Jalal al-Din Davani, could safely be considered the finest representatives of Shi‘i and Sunni philosophical authorities, respectively. Both Davani and Mulla Sadra went on to influence a host of philosophers and theologians in Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal lands. Even today one would struggle to come across Islamic philosophical writings by contemporary thinkers who did not acknowledge the centrality of Davani and Mulla Sadra in the genesis of the early modern philosophical traditions.

It has long been held that philosophic inquiry remained in a state of stagnation after the twelfth century. The sources that have been chosen in this chapter reveal that, contrary to this viewpoint, philosophers such as Sadra, Davani, and Muhibballah al-Bihari (in the third essay) made important contributions to the field of Islamic philosophy and natural sciences and inaugurated a rebirth in the field of philosophy. In the first essay, for example, Sajjad Rizvi examines

Mulla Sadra's masterpiece *The Four Journeys* (*al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliya al-arba'a*), in which Sadra illuminates his view concerning philosophy as a way of life. This perspective had many opponents, such as Mulla Tahir Qummi, a prominent preacher at the forefront of religious debates who criticized Sadra in his *Wisdom of the Gnostics* (*Hikmat al-'arifin*). His critique is also included in the translation below. The reader may recall Qummi from chapter 3 in which Ata Anzali discussed his criticism of Sufis.

In the second essay, Ahab Bdaiwi examines the thought and intellectual legacy of the Iranian philosopher Jalal al-Din Davani, whose ideas found fertile ground in the Ottoman Empire. The work under study is Davani's *The New Treatise on Establishing the [Existence] of the Necessary Being* (*Risalat Ithbat al-wajib al-jadida*), widely studied by Muslim scholars and central to the shaping of the Ottoman conception of Islamic philosophy in the early modern period. Davani in *The New Treatise* seeks to demonstrate through philosophical arguments the existence of God.

Similarly, in the third essay, Asad Ahmad examines the view of a celebrated seventeenth century Mughal scholar, Muhibballah al-Bihari, and that of a later philosopher, 'Abd al-'Ali Bahr al-'ulum, who wrote a commentary (*Fawatih al-rahamut*) on al-Bihari's *Musallam al-thubut*. A central concern for both thinkers here is with ontology, particularly insofar as a definition and understanding of existence may be applied universally to the necessary and contingent beings. The deliberations translated here are about the well-known legal-theological issue of disobedience to divine commands. If God already knows the result of one's action, does the demand to obey His command make any sense?

I. The Many Faces of Philosophy in the Safavid Age

SAJJAD RIZVI

The Safavid period ushered in an intellectual renaissance that established the study of philosophy as the pinnacle of intellectual and spiritual pursuits. This invigoration of the life of the mind was predicated on a notion that religion and philosophy were entirely parallel paths from and back to the Truth, and the act of philosophizing entailed spiritual exercises and ethical commitments. This synthetic approach, however, was not without its detractors. At its heart was a contestation of the very term *hikma*, which represented philosophy as a way of life for philosophers—a mixture of Greek thought and prophetic wisdom—and for those opposed to philosophy, it represented a wisdom that was exclusive to the teachings of the imams. For the latter, the true heresy of these philosophers lay in their mixing of the pure teachings of the imams with the conjectures of the ancient Greeks. To illustrate the contestations and faces of philosophy in Iran during this period, I selected three passages that present three modes of answering the why and the how of philosophy.

Mulla Sadra Shirazi (d. 1636) was arguably the most famous thinker of the Safavid period, and the first chapter of his magnum opus, *The Four Journeys (al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliya al-arba'a*, commonly known as *al-Asfar al-arba'a*), provides a starting point for describing both the definition and the practice of philosophy as a way of life that was so influential (and hence contested). Central to his conception is the Platonic notion (articulated in the *Theaetetus* and the *Timaeus*) that the ends of philosophy are godlikeness.

Second, I demonstrate how one of the major modes of philosophical inquiry was exegesis, not just commentaries on famous philosophers but trying to make sense of scripture through the holistic assumption that both revelation and reason pointed to the same truth. A commentary on the twelfth hadith in *Sharh al-arba'in*, known as the famous narration of 'Imran the Sabeen on the first Being (that is, God), represents this mode. The philosophical approach of Qadi Sa'id Qummi (d. 1696), a prominent thinker on the margins of the court, was similar to that of Mulla Sadra, but the results of his inquiries in metaphysics were quite distinct. His approach to theology assumed the radical distinction between the Necessary and the contingent as opposed to Mulla Sadra's monism.

Finally, I examine how philosophy was contested in the Safavid period by looking at the earliest surviving critique of Mulla Sadra. Mulla Tahir Qummi (d. 1089/1678), in his *Wisdom of the Gnostics (Hikmat al-'arifin)*, focused on the doctrine of being and its "contamination" by the monism of the Sufi school of Ibn 'Arabi. This excerpt provides a critique of the *Asfar* on monism. The text was written in the late 1650s when Qummi was the prayer leader in the Shi'i holy city of Qum and hence was an influential figure.

MULLA SADRA'S VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

In *The Four Journeys (al-Asfar al-arba'a)*, Mulla Sadra provides a famous definition of philosophy that draws upon previous exemplars and expresses his own interest in philosophy as an ethical commitment and a practiced way of life. For him, philosophy and scripture are parallel forms of revelation that are intertwined. He points out that the prophets taught the ancient sages, and when philosophy from Hellenic contexts became arabized, Muslims were reappropriating their own tradition. The goal of philosophy is to become a sage and moreover someone who attains to *theosis*, to divine likeness. This process is still predicated on Aristotelian divisions between theoretical and practical philosophy and the practice of demonstrative science.

Translation

Know that philosophy is the perfecting of the human soul (*istikmal al-nafs al-insaniya*) through cognition of the realities of existents as they truly are, and through judgments about their being, ascertained through demonstrations (*bi-l-barahin*), and not understood through conjecture or adherence to authority (*bi-l-zann wa-l-taqlid*), to the measure of human capacity (*ḥasab al-taqa al-bashariya*). You might say that it [philosophizing] ascribes to the world a rational order understood according to human capability so that one may attain a resemblance to the Creator (*al-tashabbuh bi-l-bari'*).¹

The human is kneaded of two ingredients: a spiritual form from the world of command (*'alam al-amr*, the intelligible world) and sensible matter from the world of creation (*'alam al-khalq*, the sensible world), and thus he possesses in his soul both attachment [to the body] and detachment [from it]. Wisdom is sharpened through the honing of two faculties relating to two practices: one theoretical and abstract and the other practical, attached to creation.²

The goal of the theoretical art is the fashioning of the soul with the soul of Being in its perfect and complete order, and its becoming a rational microcosm not in its matter but rather in its form and shape and countenance and presentation. This art is the wisdom sought by the lord of the messengers—peace be with him—when he beseeched in his supplication his lord saying: “O My Lord, show me things as they truly are,” and also [sought] by the intimate of God [Khalil = Abraham] when he asked: “My lord bestow upon me wise judgment” (Q. al-Shu‘ara’ 26:82). Judgment is verifying the existence of things entailed by conceptions.

The fruit of the practical art is the direct performance of good deeds in order to allow the soul control over the body and for the soul to manage and govern the body. This is alluded in the words of the Prophet—peace be with him and his progeny: “Acquire the virtues of God” and when Abraham supplicated: “And associate me with the righteous” (Q. al-Shu‘ara’ 26:83).³

The divine scripture alluded to these two arts of philosophy: “We created the human in the best of forms,” which is his form sculpted from the world of command, “then We reduced him to the lowest of the low,” which is his matter that comes from dense and tenebrous bodies, “except for those who believe,” alluding to the goal of theoretical wisdom, “and perform good deeds” (Q. al-Tin 95:4–6) alluding to the perfection of practical wisdom.

What is conveyed by the perfection of the practical faculty is that by which the order of the household is produced and salvation in the afterlife, and by the perfection of the theoretical faculty is the states of the first Cause and reversion to it and reflection upon what comes between the two through true thought and consideration. The Commander of the Faithful said: “May God bless the person who takes care of his soul and prepares for his death, and knows where he is, whence he is, and wherefore he is.” The divine philosophers understood this when they said that the prophets had established that philosophy is resemblance to the divine.⁴

The value of philosophy lies in many things. One is that it becomes a rationale for the existence of things in the most perfect sense, because if one does not know existence as it is, one cannot bring it into being or produce it. Existence is pure good and there is only value in existential good. This is what is symbolized in the saying of the divine: “and one who is given wisdom is given great good” (Q. al-Baqara 2:269). It is in this sense that God—the Exalted—called himself the Wise on many occasions in his glorious scripture, which is a revelation from the Praised and Wise, and characterized his prophets and his friends with wisdom and called them lordly sages (*rabbaniyin hukama'*) who know the realities of things. He said: “God made a covenant with the prophets when he gave them from the scripture and wisdom”

(Q. Al ‘Imran 3:81), and specifically for Luqman when he said: “We gave Luqman wisdom” (Q. Luqman 31:12). All of that was in the context of virtue and the place of bounties. There is no sense to the term “sage” except that person who is characterized by this sense of wisdom explained above. It is clear and revealed that there is nothing in existence of greater value than the essence of the worshipped One and his prophets who guide to the clearest of his paths. All of this the Exalted has described by wisdom.

The nature of its value and glory has been disclosed to us such that we must know the way of contemplating and focusing on it, the result of which is the bestowal of gifts that come and means of understanding, so that we can accept the foundation of its laws and principles and the summation of its proofs and demonstrations in the measure of what comes to us and all these various things have been disclosed to us by the First Cause. The keys to overflowing abundance are in the hands of God who gives them to whom he wishes.⁵

QADI SA‘ID QUMMI

In his commentary on the forty hadiths (in actuality twenty-seven were completed), one of the most important texts is a long exegesis on a famous disputation that is recorded in the classical Shi‘i text *‘Uyun akhbar al-Rida* by Shaykh al-Saduq (d. 991). This disputation between ‘Imran the Sabeen and the eighth Shi‘i Imam ‘Ali al-Rida at the court of al-Ma’mun represents one of many such disputations recounted by al-Saduq to demonstrate that the knowledge of the imams in matters of theology and philosophy was superior, miraculously so, to that of their contemporaries. This particular disputation is a long dialogue on the nature of the first being and the creation, and the nature of their relationship. The commentary of Qummi focuses on the nature of the first being and the first creature and demonstrates his mastery of Neoplatonic thought; just like in his commentary on the *Theologia Aristotelis* in which he cites hadith and mixes Shi‘i texts with Hellenic ones, so too do we see him here in his exegesis refer to notions from classical late Neoplatonism such as emanation (*sudur*). One also sees clearly the influence of the language of monism of the school of Ibn ‘Arabi with its focus on the levels of the manifestations of the One from the point of singularity and absence of any qualities or names, to the Names and the other theophanies of the divine in the cosmos.

Translation

Know that what is meant by “the first being” (*al-ka’in al-awwal*) in the speech of the questioner and “the One” (*al-wahid*) in the speech of the imam is the First True One (*al-mawjud al-awwal al-haqq*).⁶ What is meant by “what he created” is the first emanation (*al-sadir al-awwal*). It is clear that the questioner only asked about these

two, which is what comes to mind through the usage of the term “which one,” and as is clear from the answer when he denied that the One possesses neither limits (*hudud*) nor qualities (*a’rad*) that may be used in response to “which thing” concerning the first Cause and affirming it for the first emanation. This is what is meant by the absence of affirming in the statement of the questioner that “it is not affirmed for me,” meaning the affirmation of the essence and the explanation of the reality of affirming its existence because that was accepted by the questioner. As the speech of the questioner contained two questions, thus he—the imam—gave two answers, ending the second one by discussing the negation of need and purpose in His agency—exalted is He—in order to explain the bringing into being of the first emanation. Now let us discuss a number of issues as they arise in the narration, supplemented by their responses.

THE ISSUE

He—God—is One in his eternal simplicity (*wahda*) that encompasses not being a number (*ghayr ‘adadiya*) nor being engrossed in multiplicity nor can He be divided into dimensions, and therefore it follows that He has no limits or qualities. One cannot reply to what He is in the way that one replies to the questions “what” (*ma*) and “how” (*lima*).

THE EXPLANATION

For the first Being, he—the imam—described it as the One so that the beginning of his speech would be a response to the questioner clarifying that at the level of the singularity of the divine essence there is no other thing such that he cannot be given a name since there is no description for the Presence of Singularity (*al-hadra al-ahadiya*), no name, no specific characteristic, no description, no haecceity, no direction, no limit and no essence (*mahiya*). All of these would negate simplicity and that would make Him dependent upon the existence of others and entail many problems as the righteous recognize. All multiplicity is effaced in Him and His essence cannot possess attributes as indicated in the narration from ‘Ali when he said: “It is impossible for His essence to possess attributes.”⁷ This is among the concomitant truths of His simplicity that encompasses not being a number and hence entails the impossibility of any multiplicity. The opposite of simplicity that is not numerical is multiplicity that is not numerical, but that is impossible and cannot exist because it is self-contradictory.⁸

I think there is no proof clearer for the negation of any partner to God than affirming his simplicity that is not numerical because it is claimed that there is no doubt that God is the agent of numerical oneness in things and because the agent cannot be qualified by what he created—as is established in hadith and through demonstrations (*barahin*)—therefore He is One with a simplicity that is not numerical, and so it necessarily follows from this that He has no partner. Similarly there is

no demonstration more perfect for simplicity than what the people of God [mystics] see when they affirm this simplicity that is not numerical.

There is no better way than this of affirming that the cosmos has a first Cause (*al-mabda' al-awwal*). He—the imam—takes this path in affirming that simplicity in answer to the questioner in this narration, given that the questioner claims at the beginning of his speech that no one has affirmed for him that He is One and no other. So reflect. The One and the Simple, there is none more perfect than He, the everlasting refuge in which there is no shortcoming; whatever you suppose He is, He is other than it. The divine sage Pythagoras, disciple of Solomon the prophet, was correct when he divided oneness into oneness that is not dependent upon another and that is the oneness of the Creator and oneness that encompasses all things, oneness that judges the existence of a thing, oneness from which units and the many existents emanate, and oneness that is dependent on another such as the oneness of existents.⁹ One might report this division from him in another way: absolute oneness is divided into oneness before perpetuity (*dahr*) and that is the oneness of the Creator, oneness with perpetuity and that is the oneness of the universal intellect (*al-'aql*), and oneness after perpetuity and before time (*al-zaman*), which is the oneness of the universal soul (*al-nafs*), and oneness with time, which is the oneness of the elements and the compounds.¹⁰

In sum, as he—the imam—said: “He remains One and nothing is with Him,” and “He remains as such” in allusion to His essential Simplicity that does not listen to the song of the multiplicity of essences. At that level do all essences become extinct. He is He in preternity and eternity as al-Sadiq said in answer to the question, “What is God greater than?” He said: “God is greater than all things.” “So then there is something He is greater than.” He—the imam—said: “God is greater than what one imagines.”

And his saying: “he has no limits nor qualities” indicated that presence that does not culminate in a limit or a direction nor is any description or quality capable of sufficing it. The limit comprises the sustaining causes and other than them because all things culminate in their limits as is established in the books of philosophy concerning the finitude of causes. It also comprises the existence of the general and the specific because it is one of the limits, rather it is the first of them as it is clear from demonstration and from the saying of al-Sadiq in the narration of the materialist who questioned him to the point when he—the imam—said: “You have limited Him (*haddadtahu*) when you have affirmed His existence,” meaning that based on the principles that I mentioned before, you know that when you affirm existence of Him this entails limitation. He—the imam—said: “I did not limit him, that is, you spoke truly when you said, Because I affirmed His existence, I limited Him, but I affirmed Him in the sense of negating the claim of denying and negating it; if I did not affirm Him, what would be understood from that is pure negation and sheer nonexistence, but God is far above such agnosticism.” Then he—the imam—said: “As there is no station between negation and affirmation” meaning that because there is no station between negation and affirmation, there cannot be any talk of a means between them, as negation is not

appropriate to it, therefore necessarily I chose affirmation, not in the sense of affirmation of existents—God is far above such immanence—but by pure necessity and compulsion. This explanation emanating from the very source of wisdom and prophecy is the greatest realization of the term “being” shared (*ishtirak lafzi*) between the Necessary and the contingent.¹¹ So reflect.

The limit also comprises the attributes in their being the same and in their being additional to the divine essence because one who attributes something to God limits Him. It also comprises the limits established by the senses and the intellect—all of these are negated of God. What is meant by the qualities in the terminology of the narrations are qualities necessitating change whether these are psychological or not, hence one ought to take them according to the terminology of the philosophers.

AN ADMONITION

Know that the claim that there is nothing with Him in preternity or eternity does not negate His saying, “He is with you” (Q. al-Hadid 57:4); this is one of the most obscure issues in theology. The cause is with the effect but the effect is not with the cause, because if it were with the cause in its essence then its constituents would occur without and independent of its essence, if one solely analyzed it. “Being-with” in essence entails independence and a type of loneliness—but that is impossible. Its essence and qualities are extinguished in the cause, but it is the manifestation of the cause and its states and subsisting by its subsistence and by its (the cause) making it (the effect) subsist. The perfect thing cannot be divided from its essence or the concomitants of its essence and its manifestations because it exists necessarily with all of them. So the cause is with the effect but the effect is not with the cause.

Of the great sages who came close to this point is Empedocles the disciple of Luqman when he said: “The Creator creates the forms not through a type of will that is suspended but by a type that is causative.” So the cause is with the effect but the effect is not, for if it were not, then the effect is with the cause in essence. If it were allowed to be held that an effect is with the cause then the effect in this case is not the same as the cause so the effect is not prior in its being as an effect to the cause, and nor is the cause by its being a cause prior to the effect. Then the effect must be one by the cause and the cause is the cause of all causes and so necessarily the effect is not with the cause in any direction at all. If it were, then it would destroy the very sense of the terms cause and effect.¹²

THE ISSUE

The first emanation from the Creator is the Intellect.

Know that when the questioner asked about the first creature what is it, he was not intending to learn and clarify first of all the reality of the first emanation and its essential qualities because that had already been discussed by the ancients and

others and in the occult sciences. But he—the imam—offered his explanation by discussing the specific and essential qualities, and he guided him to it by negating all the concomitant qualities of existents from Him. Then his saying, “Then He created a creation *ex nihilo* (*muḥtadīʿan*)” is an allusion to the specific quality of that existent and creating *ex nihilo* means to establish what was not before, or in other terms, bringing into being from nothing, as expressed by the poles of the theologians and evident in the usage of the narrations of the imams. This meaning is not specific to the first emanation because it is also true of the soul, prime matter and form, in fact of many of the actual realities, and many that are used in the custom of the imams in the sense of bringing into being without cause or from nothing. This sense is only true of the first emanation because one cannot ask of it “how” it came to be, that is, how did its agent bring it into being. Because “how” asks about the cause of something and the cause is what is in answer to “how” must be predicted of the efficient cause that it has insofar as it is a causer prior to it explained by “because.” So it must be predicable and the Creator—glorified is He—has nothing prior to it nor is it complex such that its essence is composed of causes each of which may be in response to the question “how.” Just as he—glorified is He—said: “He is not asked about what he does but they will be asked” [Q. al-Anbiya’ 21:23].

As for what is not the first emanation, it can be asked of it “how” even about the agency of the first emanation, just as the intellect becomes a cause for the soul. It must therefore be emanations of luminous illuminations from the first Principle such that one can speak of these illuminations. It brings the soul into being but in some of the cause “how” and the “what” are one such as the higher causes in the world of generation and corruption, but in other causes they are differentiated. So understand.

Then the imam said: “different qualities and different limits.” What is meant by qualities are different orientations in the first emanation, and by limits his sustaining causes. When one distinguishes the bringing into being from other substances generally in the sense of origination just as he clarified through his allusion to the perfection of its differentiation from it and being determined of it in three apophatic ways:

The first of these is what one grasps from the imam’s saying: “It does not subsist in anything” which is not true of accident or form, as these two subsist in a substrate and in matter.¹³ So it is not the case for these two that they can be the first emanation because their existence is posterior to the existence of these receptacles.

The second of these is what is alluded in the imam’s saying: “there is nothing that limits it” as opposed to prime matter and body as these two are limited by form so it is necessary for the being of each of the two to emanate from the First—glorified is He—without any mediation. As for body, it is apparent that it is posterior to its parts and prime matter can only exist with form that is identical to it as it is not a cause for form nor is form a cause for it. This entails the emanation of multiplicity from the One as is the case with agents but they [matter and body] are not agents.

The third of these is what is expressed by the imam's saying: "Nor is he restricted by anything" in opposition to the soul as the divine lights imitate what is in the intellect and have a similitude to it and hence restrict it. But that is not the case with the first emanation because its similitude is posterior to what it is similar to. The same is true of matter that requires it to be prior to it or together within it at the level of perpetuity (*dahr*).

Then the imam explained in general terms the emanation of multiplicity from that emanation by saying: "then he made creation after it a pure thing" alluding to immaterial intellects and souls and "what is not pure" referring to matter and material things.¹⁴

TAHIR QUMMI'S VIEWS

I. The *Wisdom of the Gnostics* (*Hikmat al-'arifin*) is an important critique of the philosophy of Mulla Sadra and is, in fact, the first work to cite him critically. One can discern in Qummi's corpus a suspicion of philosophy as such because it arose from Greek origins and not from the imams. But in this work in particular he rallies against philosophy influenced by the monism of the school of Ibn 'Arabi, which is exemplified in the work of Mulla Sadra. Three passages from this text are presented here. The first is a short one taken from the introduction excoriating philosophy, by arguing that philosophy takes people away from the imams. True wisdom lies in adhering to scriptural knowledge and includes both theoretical knowledge and practical wisdom and ethics rooted in these sources.

Translation

When the Seal of the prophets (*khatam al-anbiya'*) passed from this transient abode, the community went astray and forsook the practice of the prophet. They followed their whims and became divided into many sects, but the only one of them that is successful is the one that adheres to the people of the mantle. . . .

The Imami Shi'a, the successful sect, used to follow the teachings of their imams from the pure progeny and would make sense of their works for their principles and subsidiary matters until the occultation of the Mahdi. . . . After that some became like sheep in search of a shepherd. After the passage of time, they differed and branched out and some became Mu'tazila and some became traditionalists.¹⁵ Just as others before them became confounded, so did many of the Shi'a and some became Mu'tazila and some followed the doctrine of the philosophers. If it is said: how can one allow the condemnation and excoriation of philosophy when philosophy is *hikma* and the sages are philosophers. God praised wisdom in his scripture when he said: "and one who has been given wisdom has been given great good" (Q. al-Baqara 2:269). . . .¹⁶ However, we say that wisdom mentioned in these verses

is not in the sense of philosophy as assumed by those confounded; rather, wisdom in these verses is glossed as obedience to God and recognition of the imam of the time. . . .¹⁷

Wisdom is the recognition of the imam and the wise one is one who recognizes the true imam and who acquires from him knowledge of the religion. There is no doubt that the pure imams from the progeny—the true imams and the sources of wisdom—learned wisdom from the prophet, including both the principles and subsidiary matters of the faith and knowledge of vices and virtues, and methods of spiritual practices, and not issues of philosophy that are contrary to the scripture and to the prophetic practice.

II. The second is a specific critique of the doctrine of existence in Mulla Sadra, located in the conclusion, which is a refutation of the invalidity of the doctrine of the unity of being, or monism. In particular, Qummi reads Mulla Sadra as arguing for a form of pantheism in which there is a substantial unity proposed for all that exists.

Translation

Know that it is apparent from what we have explained about the nature of existence and essence that the doctrine of the so-called Sufis known as the *wujudiya* is false when they claim that the Creator—exalted is He—is the none other than pure Being insofar as it is unconditioned (*la shart*) and undetermined (*la ta'ayyun*).¹⁸ He is neither substance nor accident, because substances have essence apart from their existence, as does accident. He does not need to be distinguished from non-existence by any determination because there is no commonality between the two states nor is he determined and distinguished from the world of spirits and bodies. He is the totality of the cosmos and his relationship to the parts of the cosmos is like that of the natural universal to its individuals.¹⁹ There is no doubt that this claim is sheer unbelief (*kufr*) and clear associationism (*shirk*).

It is established through rational and scriptural proofs that the essence of the Creator is a thing in the true sense of being a thing, but not like other things, distinguished from all of creation; He does not resemble anything. We have previously explained that being is not a thing in extra-mental reality and it is not the same as the existent thing; rather it is a secondary intelligible and an abstract concept.²⁰ Hence it would not be the case that he is a creative cause or creator of forms or volitional agent. A natural universal (*kulli tabi'i*), self-evidently, has not existence in extra-mental reality, and as is well known it has no chain of effects in extra-mental reality because effects pertain to individuals and an individual cannot be an effect of a universal essence.²¹ And of course it is necessarily the case that a thing cannot be its own cause. Besides, the claim that the relationship of God to the cosmos is like that of the natural universal to its individuals belies the

saying of God: “there is nothing that is a like unto Him” (Q. al-Shura 42:11). . . . One cannot have recourse to mystical unveiling (*kashf*) in this matter because it is like the claim that it is unveiled that there is no creator or that God is the third of three.²²

III. Qummi argues that one must affirm that God exists and is real because the religion requires that, but ascribing the abstract notion of existence to Him is another matter. He continues his critique citing Mulla Sadra from the *Four Journeys* and from his *Divine Witnessings* (*al-Shawahid al-rububiya*).

Translation

As for his saying, “He exists through existence which is identical to him,” if it means that God is identical to the self-evident notion of existence then there are many arguments to refute that as we have already indicated. If he means that the essence of the Creator is in reality not identical to the self-evident notion of existence but rather is identical to it in a figurative sense such that his existence does not rest upon a cause and that the Creator in this consideration exists in reality through existence that is particular to Him just as the remainder of existents exist through existences that are particular to them, then that does not entail (belief in) the unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujud*). Mulla Sadra says in his *Divine Witnessings*, having adopted the method of Ibn ‘Arabi, his ilk, and his followers: “It is not permissible to uphold the view adopted by one of the illustrious scholars, which he called ‘the taste of the theosists’ (*dhawq al-muta’alihin*), such that the being of the existentiality of things and their essences with respect to existence is the meaning of unicity (*tawhid*) at its root, but this is not what is tasted by the theosists because its foundation is that the first emanation from the Agent is essence and not existence and that essence exists without existence, which he claims is a “being of reason” and one of the secondary intelligibles.²³ But you know the invalidity of this. If this were the nature of the unity of being as they claim, then the specific existence of each contingent would be a purely abstract matter, which was unreal, and what is actual in extra-mental reality is only essence. Thus it would then be essences, which are united in extra-mental reality.”

Here Mulla Sadra is criticizing the view of Jalal al-Din Davani (d. 1502) who held that existence is purely an abstract concept when applied to contingents; only God truly exists. However, as suggested because he held that existents were merely essences then the unity of those entities in extra-mental reality would constitute a doctrine of the unity of essence and not of existence.

So you have come to know the invalidity of this sense of unity of being and also the one adopted by this scholar (Mulla Sadra), and we shall continue with further proofs that demonstrate the invalidity of the position.

NOTES

1. Mulla Sadra Shirazi, *al-Hikma al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliya al-arba'a*, ed. Ghulam-Rida A'wani (Tehran: Sadra Islamic Research Institute, 2004), 1:23–26. This is the key theme of *theosis*, the Platonic end of philosophy being godlikeness.
2. Mulla Sadra juxtaposes the Aristotelian division of philosophy into theoretical and practical arts with the homologies between two aspects of the human (the body and the soul) and two worlds (the higher intelligible and the lower sensible).
3. This phrase is the second part of Q. 26:83 and the remainder of Abraham's prayer.
4. This is a good example of the way in which Mulla Sadra juxtaposes exegesis and philosophy in the *Four Journeys*.
5. For Mulla Sadra, true wisdom cannot be attained through the independent action of the philosopher. It requires divine grace and for God to bestow understanding and discernment in the heart of the seeker.
6. Qadi Sa'id Qummi, *Sharh al-arba'in*, ed. Najafquli Habibi (Tehran: Mirath-i maktub, 2000), 277–87.
7. There are various narrations from the first Shi'i Imam 'Ali on this theme. One famous example is the first sermon in the collection collated by al-Sharif al-Radi. *Nahj al-balagha* (Najaf: al-'Ataba al-'alawiya, 2015), 39.
8. This is an example of an argument from its contrary (*argumentum a contrario*). As the contrary is false, so too is the proposition.
9. On Pythagoras as a Muslim monotheist of the doxographies, see Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa-l-nihal*, ed. Ahmad Fahmi Muhammad (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiya, 1992), 2:385–98 (the view quoted by Qummi is on page 386); Qummi's contemporary Qutb al-Din Ashkiwari, *Mahbub al-qulub I*, ed. Ibrahim Dibaji and Hamid Sidqi (Tehran: Mirath-i maktub, 1999), 208–32; Matthieu Terrier, trans., *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shi'ite: "L'aimé de cœurs" de Qutb al-Din Askevari* (Paris: Cerf, 2016), 373–420.
10. This passage draws on the threefold levels of temporality that one finds in Avicenna. The level of eternity (*sarmad*) that is unique to God, the level of perpetuity (*dahr*) in which the immutable divine and the other eternals interact such as the intellects, and the level of time (*zaman*) that is the sublunary cosmos, the world of generation and corruption. This exists within a cosmology of the emanation of existence from the One to the Intellect to the Soul and then to a series of intellects, souls, and spheres.
11. Qadi Sa'id Qummi, like his teacher Rajab 'Ali Tabrizi, denied the doctrine of the modulation of being (*tashkik al-wujud*) associated with Mulla Sadra. He held that *being* was merely a term shared between God and other things said to exist but that no commonality in meaning is intended by the term.
12. For this and similar material on the Arabic Empedocles, see al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa-l-nihal*, vol. 2, 379–85 (the view quoted by Qummi is on page 380); Qummi's contemporary Qutb al-Din Ashkiwari, *Mahbub al-qulub* 1:205–8, in Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shi'ite*, 363–73. For a discussion of this figure, see Daniel de Smet,

Empedocles Arabus: une lecture néoplatonicienne tardive (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1998).

13. This draws upon the Aristotelian position of hylemorphism and category theory. Things in this world are composites of form (*sura*) and matter (*madda*) in which forms are active principles and matter passive, but the former requires the latter to exist. Similarly, accidental qualities such as place, quality, and quantity can only exist in a subject or substrate (*mawdu'*).
14. Intellects and souls are pure entities because they are free of material composition and generation and corruption. Matter, in a Neoplatonic conception, is a “contaminating” entity because it renders the thing susceptible to generation and corruption.
15. It is a common accusation used by those opposed to philosophy to argue that it represents going astray in the period of confusion after the advent of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam.
16. Qummi here cites exactly those verses mentioned by Mulla Sadra as constituting allusions to philosophy.
17. Various Shi'i exegeses link wisdom in the Qur'an with the recognition of the imam—see the exegesis attributed to 'Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi, *Tafsir*, eds. Sayyid Muhammad Abtahi et al. (1434; Qum: Mu'assasat al-Imam al-Mahdi, 2013), 1:138. Similarly, Mulla Sadra's student Muhsin Fayd Kashani (d. 1680), an erstwhile rival of Qummi, mentions so in his *Tafsir al-Safi*, ed. Husayn al-A'jami (Tehran: Maktabat al-Sadr, 1994), 1:298–99, where he also identifies the imams as the sages (*hukama'*).
18. The interesting feature of the text is that Qummi spends most of the time critiquing the views of philosophers and presenting what is the correct doctrine on the nature of metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology, all of which contain an implicit refutation of monism. Thus the conclusion moves to a more explicit refutation focusing on Mulla Sadra and Ibn 'Arabi, the latter of whom he characterizes with unbelief (*kufi*).
19. This form of pantheism is not the doctrine of Mulla Sadra.
20. Like Suhrawardi (d. 1191) and others, Qummi seems to hold that existence is not a real predicate and is merely an abstract “being of reason.” For some of the philosophers before Mulla Sadra, only God is existence. For Mulla Sadra, being is predicated in a modulated manner of God and all others.
21. A natural universal is an essence predicated of individuals that exists in extra-mental reality and in nature.
22. An important feature of Qummi's critique of Sufism is the attack on *kashf* as a method of verification; the point here is simple—one cannot establish falsehoods through *kashf*.
23. Davani associated his view with what is acquired through theosis, and hence he is arguing that it is a true doctrine that has been disclosed to him.

FURTHER READING

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II. Philosophia Ottomanica

JALAL AL-DIN DAVANI ON ESTABLISHING THE EXISTENCE OF THE NECESSARY BEING

AHAB BDAIWI

THE CASE FOR DAVANI

Admittedly, the philosophical writings of the Iranian polymath Jalal al-Din Davani (d. 1502)¹ are not the most salient choice for selected readings on Ottoman philosophy. Davani, however, had a powerful impact on Ottoman intellectual life² and was a widely read author particularly popular in Ottoman lands.³ Manuscript evidence attests to the centrality of Davani in Ottoman scholarly culture. The catalog of the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul lists 891 copies of works by, or related to, Davani.⁴

Little surprise, then, that in the realms of philosophy, philosophical theology, logic, and occultism,⁵ Davani exerted a profound influence on later Ottoman and Mughal learning.⁶ Indeed, few modern scholars would contest Davani's status as one of the most influential philosophers and theologians active after the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century and before the rise of the Safavids in the sixteenth.

Emblematic of Davani's reputation for erudition and popularity beyond Iran—whence he hailed—is the fact that in the last decades of the fifteenth century the Ottoman sultan Bayezid (r. 1481–1512) encouraged his personal friend Mu'ayyadzade 'Abd al-Rahman Efendi (d. 1516), the renowned Ottoman thinker,⁷ to travel to Iran to study under the tutelage of Davani.⁸ In fact, Efendi played an instrumental role in promoting and circulating the ideas of Davani in Ottoman realms during the latter's lifetime, leading modern scholars to describe Efendi as

“a vector in Ottoman lands for the dissemination of the knowledge that he had acquired in Shiraz.”⁹ Nor does the Davani-Ottoman link stop here. We know of at least three philosophical writings of Davani that were dedicated to Sultan Bayezid: *Risalat Ithbat al-wajib al-qadima*; *al-Hashiya al-jadida*, the second set of glosses on ‘Ali Qushchi’s (d. 1474) famous commentary on Nasir al-Din Tusi’s (d. 1274) *Tajrid al-i’tiqad*; and *Sharh al-ruba’iyyat*, a commentary on his own quatrains.¹⁰

To grasp the popularity and apparent centrality of Davani in the Ottoman philosophical tradition in the early modern period, a brief note on the decline of Sunni philosophical theology in Iran in its Ash‘ari permutation is in order. In the late Timurid period,¹¹ Ash‘arism was the dominant philosophical current and arguably the intellectual tradition par excellence particularly in western Iran.¹² However, shortly after the rise of the Shi‘i Safavids in 1501, the influence and prevalence of the Ash‘ari tradition waned, at least in western Iran; soon thereafter, Ash‘arism played second fiddle to the philosophical tradition advanced by the circle of Dashtaki philosophers and their students.¹³

The establishment of a new Shi‘i polity and the death of Davani in 1501 or 1502 did not, however, bring philosophical Ash‘arism to a complete halt, at least not in Iran. Whatever Ash‘ari presence there was in Iran, it was manifested in the writings of Davani’s students, most of whom, if not all, preferred exegetical writing; they penned expository glosses on their teacher’s major philosophical works.¹⁴ Most of Davani’s students and their students, who had previously studied in Shiraz, moved to various geographical locations that fell outside the sociopolitical orbit of the new Shi‘i polity; some moved to Ottoman territories and others migrated to India.¹⁵

DAVANI AND OTTOMAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

That the “triumph of fanaticism” in the seventeenth century set in motion the rapid decline of the Ottoman philosophical traditions and brought an end to the study of philosophy is a view no longer tenable in modern scholarship. A recent study on Ottoman intellectual history has conclusively shown that the philosophical disciplines were studied assiduously in the Ottoman Empire throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁶ Contrary to the hackneyed assumptions that the fanatical Qadizadelis suppressed the rational traditions, Ottoman scholarly circles of the seventeenth century turned to works on philosophy, logic, dialectics, philosophical theology, semantics, rhetoric, and grammar by Persian thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.¹⁷ Standing at the head of the line of those Persian philosophers and theologians was Davani. The writings of Davani, particularly on philosophy and philosophical theology, were studied, taught, and commented upon by Azeri and Kurdish thinkers who “made an impression on local scholars with their mastery” of the “books of the Persians.”¹⁸

From the seventeenth century onward, most of the major Ottoman philosophers were trained in the works of Davani.¹⁹ Similarly, many Ottoman intellectual elite traced their philosophical lineage back to Davani. For instance, Hoca 'Abd ul-Rahim (d. 1656),²⁰ Ibrahim Kurani (d. 1690),²¹ Tefsiri Mehmed b. Hamza Debbagi (d. 1699),²² Haydar b. Ahmad Husaynabadi (d. 1717),²³ Ebu Sa'id b. Mustafa Hadimi (d. 1762),²⁴ Isma'il Gelenbevi (d. 1791),²⁵ and Isma'il Konevi (d. 1781),²⁶ all renowned teachers of philosophy in central and eastern Ottoman lands, claimed intellectual descent from Davani.

Three works of Davani received considerable attention in Ottoman intellectual circles: his commentary on *Tahdhib al-mantiq* by Sa'd al-Din Taftazani (d. 1390); his commentary on *al-'Aqa'id al-'Adudiyya* by 'Adud al-Din Iji (d. 1355); and the *Risalat Ithbat al-wajib*. The last work of Davani is written independently in two recensions: the *Risalat Ithbat al-wajib al-qadima* (*The Old Treatise on Establishing the [Existence] of the Necessary [Being]*) and the *Risalat Ithbat al-wajib al-jadida* (*The New Treatise on Establishing the [Existence] of the Necessary [Being]*).

In the prologue of the *New Treatise*, Davani tells us that he wrote the *Old Treatise* in the heyday of his youth (*'unfuwan shababi*), without specifying exactly when. But according to the colophon of the MS Ragıp 1457,²⁷ the *Old Treatise* is dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II in 1489, which seems rather late, especially as Davani was born sixty-three years earlier. More plausible, though, is that the date of 1489 refers to the time when Bayezid II sent a letter of gratitude to Davani thanking him for using subtle philosophical language and insightful precision in diction when composing the *Old Treatise*.²⁸ It is probable, then, that the copyist transcribed the date of 1489 on the colophon of the manuscript, confusing it with the date the letter was issued and when presumably the copyist had read or heard of it.

As for the *New Treatise*, we learn from the Safavid-era historian and philosopher Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari (d. 1610) that Davani composed this work during his sojourn in Lar, shortly before his death sometime in 1501 or 1502.²⁹ However, the narrative is compounded further when the same source of evidence, namely, Shushtari, and echoing him Ahmad Tuysirkani, renowned modern editor of the works of Davani, claim without clear proof that the *New Treatise* was completed ten or so years after the *Old Treatise*.³⁰ If we accept this last claim, then the date of composition of the *New Treatise* would have to be long before 1501 or 1502. This leaves us with two plausible scenarios regarding the date of composition for the *New Treatise*. The work was either written (1) in Davani's youthful years, long before 1501 or 1502; or (2) during Davani's more mature life or shortly before his death in 1501 or 1502. Both possibilities have merit, but the second is more plausible, that is, the *Old Treatise* was written in Davani's later, more mature years.

When Davani completed the *Old Treatise*, it is possible that he was taken aback by and became uncomfortable with the criticisms of his contemporary and fierce rival Sadr al-Din Dashtaki (d. 1498). Responding to Davani and his supposed flimsy

grasp of philosophical topics, Dashtaki penned *Risala fi Ithbat al-bari wa-sifatihi* in 1497 primarily to undermine the scholarly credentials of Davani. To refute the criticisms of Dashtaki, Davani probably started writing the *New Treatise* shortly after 1497. Davani must have completed the work after Dashtaki's death in 1498 because he refrains from specifically naming Dashtaki, which he typically did in previous works when Dashtaki was alive. It is possible then that Davani deliberately invented a chronological chasm between the *Old Treatise* and the *New Treatise* to allay the criticisms of his disputant,³¹ for surely ambitious youth can be forgiven for their vacuous grasp of philosophy.

The excerpt that follows are partial translations of the main sections of the *New Treatise* by Davani,³² which would have been read, studied, and taught in Ottoman scholarly circles as early as the late sixteenth century. This work had a profound impact on Ottoman philosophy, so much so that one may characterize the work as reflective of Ottoman philosophical concerns in the early modern period.

The *New Treatise* is divided into a brief prologue, fourteen sections, and a conclusion. Broadly, the work is intended to demonstrate through philosophical arguments the existence of a being whose existence is necessary. In religious parlance, *God* is the term used to denote this necessary being. More specifically, in this treatise Davani bears the unmistakable imprint of an Avicennan philosopher with a pronounced penchant for the syllogistic method rather than dialectics and scriptural attestation. In the Safavid period, the *New Treatise* was the subject of at least six known commentaries,³³ and in the Ottoman era it received no fewer than twelve commentaries and glosses.³⁴

TRANSLATION

A Treatise on Establishing the Existence of God

I. ON ESTABLISHING THE EXISTENCE OF THE NECESSARY BEING

Rest assured that the [human] intellect, in the first instance, divides the existing being into (A) that whose existence is posited as necessary due to the nature of its essence; and (B) that whose existence and nonexistence is posited as possible due to its essence. As for A it is Necessary-due-to-Its-Essence, whereas B is possible, or contingent.

That whose existence and nonexistence are [equally] possible is self-evident and needs not mediating and explanatory qualification, for we bear witness to the coming-into-being of existents after they were nonexistent. As for the Necessary, however, it needs mediating and explanatory qualification. The mediating and explanatory qualification is as follows:

A concomitant conclusion that comes after insightful contemplation upon the concept of the existing being is that it cannot come into being and subsist without the Necessary, for had the existing being remained in the mode of possibility,

no existing being would ever come into being and subsist. An explanation of the concomitance is in order:

Based on this supposition, the possible came into being either through its own ontological state without [an efficient] cause; however, this is self-evidently impossible. Another plausible scenario is that the possible came into being through that which is other than it; accordingly, this other than it is also possible; it follows, then, that either (i) the sequential unitary existent beings will regress ad infinitum; or (ii) fall into circularity. Both presumptions yield a situation whereby an individual contingent is self-sustaining in need not of a cause to preponderate its existence over its nonexistence (*sabab yurajjih wujudihi 'ala 'adamih*); however, this [is known to be] impossible (*muhal*). This is because the contingent cannot come into being unless there is a cause that makes its coming-into-being necessary (that is, *al-mumkin ma lam yujab lam yujad*) and this necessity [which causes it to come into being] cannot materialize until all dimensions of nonexistence are impeded; and without the necessary cause there cannot be an impediment to the all dimensions of nonexistence. This is a subtle proof that is easy to grasp and does not require an invalidation of circularity and infinite regress.

This last approach, then, shows that some existents are necessary due to the essence; moreover, this approach shows that existence [of a necessary being due to its essence] can be demonstrated without recourse to the existence of contingent existents, which, as is famously known, the method preferred by the theologians.

If you say [in objection]:

Do you not presuppose in the proof you bring forth that the existence of the contingent is established and indubitable especially when you say, “the existence of the contingent is self-evident, for we do not observe its opposite *in concreto*.”

If you say [as a follow-up]:

The proof rests on the supposition that there is some kind of existent being whose existence is in need not of demonstrating the existence of a contingent existent.

To this we respond as follows:

There is no doubt that there is some kind of existing being whose existence is either necessary or contingent. If the former, then the aim of our proof is met; and if the latter, then that contingent must be in need of the necessary, as already stated. Alternatively, we could also say there is no doubt that an existent being of some kind exists; and its existence cannot subsist independently of the existence of the necessary without entailing an impossibility. This is because if the existence of any being is confined to something contingent, then based on the previous statement, no existing being will subsist, ever.

The proof is distinct from the one taken up by the theologians; and he (that is, Avicenna) has described it in the *Isharat* as the *Proof of the Veracious*.

II. THAT HIS EXISTENCE IS NOT ADDITIONAL TO HIM BUT IS IDENTICAL TO HIS SPECIAL EXISTENCE

The proof is that had His [that is, God, or the Necessary Being] existence been additional to Him [that is, His essence], so that that additional existence, A, for example, exists to the extent its essence allows, and without taking into account its [that is, A] accidents, A is then neither existing nor nonexisting . . . whatever thing is in such ontological state is a contingent existing being; this is because its characterization as “existing” is either (i) due to its essence, which is impossible because that which is not brought into being cannot bring another into being. It follows then that its existence is prior to its essence; but this is the opposite of what is intended. Or, (ii) due to something other than it; in which case it becomes caused and hence not necessary.

It cannot be said [that]: The necessary in our view is an expression denoting the necessity of the essence requiring existence, and if its essence required its existence then it follows that it is necessary through its essence and in need not of a cause, for the need (*al-haja*) is a component of contingency; it, however, is necessary, not contingent; it does not follow then that something is prior to itself.

To this we respond:

There is no difference between the cause and necessity except in denotation. If the necessary is necessitated by its existence then it is a cause for itself; in which case the conclusion that must be avoided follows.

You say:

The nonexistence of contingency is either (i) through the essence or (ii) other than the essence. In the case of (i) the essence becomes a cause, for a cause cannot take meaning except as that which when taken into consideration nonexistence cannot be; in the case of (ii) it follows that it becomes in need of something other than it; in which case it cannot be necessary, which is the opposite of what is intended.

It cannot be said [that]:

It is necessary by the relation of concomitance that the necessary is a cause for itself based on the reckoning that it is identical to existence (*‘ayn al-wujud*), necessarily entailed by the impossibility of its nonexistence for its essence.

This is because we say [as a response to the above]:

The reckoning that it is identical to existence is not merely a characterization. And the meaning of the impossibility of its nonexistence for its essence is that it is the indubitable and affirmed existence.

It has been firmly established, then, that the Necessary, exalted is He, is pure existence that subsists through its essence; and it, the Necessary, is of an essence that is free of relations and considerations (*al-nisab wa l-i'tibarat*).

III. THAT HIS ATTRIBUTES ARE IDENTICAL WITH HIS ESSENCE

[His attributes are identical with His essence], for if an attribute inheres in Him but subsists as other than His essence in the same way one of us [humans] becomes knowledgeable when such attributes as knowledge inheres in him, and when one becomes powerful when such attributes as power (*qudra*) inheres in him, and when one becomes willful when such attributes as will inheres in him, and similarly with other attributes; in such eventuality the necessary, exalted is He, becomes the agent and recipient of these attributes (*fa'il^{an} li-tilka al-sifat wa-qabil^{an} laha*). This in mind we will strive to demonstrate that the Simple Real (*al-basit al-haqiqi*) cannot be the agent and recipient of the same thing simultaneously; on the contrary, the necessary, exalted is He, insofar as He is free of matter and its concomitants, is the loftiest aims of immateriality; He is knowledge (*fa-huwa 'ilm*); and, insofar as He is subsisting due to His essence not through other than His essence, He is knowledge due to His essence; He is at once knowledge, knowledgeable, and the known (*'ilm^{an} wa-alim^{an} wa-ma'lum^{an}*); this is not the sole preserve of the necessary, but all other immaterial things partake in this; even the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqa*), insofar as it is free of quiddity and subsisting due to its essence, is at once knowledge, knowledgeable, and known (*'ilm wa-'alim wa-'ma'lum*).

IV. ON GOD'S POWER

Power denotes the thing being such when it is justifiable [to say] action can and cannot come forth (*sudur*) from it with intention (*bi l-qasd*). And because His [that is, God] grasping knowledge of the totality of the cosmos is the cause of the coming forth of the contingents, and if the contingents relate to Him insofar as they come forth from Him, it follows, according to this definition, that His knowledge is power. And if the contingents relate to Him insofar as He is sufficient (*kaf*) in their coming forth from Him, it follows, according to this definition, that [His knowledge] is [classified as] will (*irada*). The disparity (or the difference) between power and will is similar to the disparity between them and knowledge, as well as between knowledge and the essence, is mentally posited (*i'tibari*). He is powerful insofar as something can come forth from Him; and He is willful insofar as specific action comes forth from Him. The well-known definition among the philosophers is that [His] power describes the following: If He so wills, actions will come forth; if He does not will, action will not come forth. They [that is, the philosophers] describe the first conditional [of the statement] as necessary and subsisting in reality whereas the premise of the second conditional is impossible and does not

subsist in reality. Philosophers of the later tradition have singled out this definition as the point of contentious between them and the theologians, who describe as possible the coming forth of the cosmos and its coming to an end after it comes into existence (*sudur al-'alam wa-ifna'ihī ba'd wujudihi*); the philosophers hold this to be an impossibility [. . .]

The theologians aver that with regard to animals, power is a quality of the soul (*kayfiyya nafsaniyya*); power is the [correct] requirement for action and the nonexistence of action; it has equal relation to both of the possible outcomes. Theologians disagreed among themselves as to whether power is ontologically prior to (or precedes) action. In my view [however,] the debate is essentially about the essence of power. Those who aver that power is ontologically prior to action bring forth two points: First, if power did not precede action, then obligating (*taklif*) belief upon a disbeliever becomes [an instance of] obligating the incapable (*taklif al-'ajiz*)—and although God is capable of imposing such an obligation, according to the [doctrines of] the Ash'aris—this kind of obligation does not occur in reality, as stated by God, exalted is He: “God charges no soul beyond its capacity” [Q. 2:286].

Second, power is necessarily required for an action to be temporally originated (*ihdath*); this necessary requirement [for a cause] is discarded when the action ensues.

As for the first point, I respond as follows: the argument is problematic, namely, that when obligation is placed upon the disbeliever this will be followed by the acquisition of faith for that individual and is a demonstration that power is ontologically prior to will; for if the individual persists in disbelief, he will never acquire the power that takes him out of the fold of disbelief; this is based on the assumption that power and will occur at the same time, and hence the individual will not enter the state of obligation. The second [point] is invalid based on [scholarly] consensus.

V. ON GOD'S WILL

According to the explications of the theologians [the will of God] is specified for one of two possible actions. Some [theologians] state that in the case of animals the will is assured desire (*shawq*) certain of achieving the desired (*al-murad*). It has [also] been stated that [the will] is different from desire; for will is [defined as] determination to uphold the intent. [In some instances] man may crave that for which he does not will—delicious foods, for example. A rational man, however, will refrain for he knows the determinants of delicious [and unhealthy] food. That rational man may will for that which he does not crave—bitter-tasting but health-benefiting medicine, for example. The theologians draw distinctions: for them, the will is [defined as] a voluntary inclination (or impetus) (*mayl ikhtiyari*); whereas desire is a natural inclination.

It is said:

It is for this reason that an obligated agent (*mukallaf*) is punished for willful sins but not for holding a desire to commit sins. And those [that is, theologians] hold that the starting origins (*mabadi'*) of voluntary actions in animals are five: conceptualization (*tasawwur*); belief in benefit and dispelling of harm (*i'tiqad al-naf' wa-daf' al-dar*); desire; will; agent faculty (*al-quwwa al-muharrika*). The early [theologians, however] discard the will in order to make it identical with assured desire (*al-shawq al-muta'akkid*).

To this, I respond:

As for the view that intent (*qasd*) and will are part of the voluntary actions, had this been true then [intent] would require another [prior] intent ad infinitum. The argument that some of it is voluntary, while part of it is not, is arbitrary (*tahakkum*) with no basis in reality; what is evident, though, is that when desire vanquishes, the [effect of the] will transpires necessarily. The starting origins of voluntary actions end up at the compulsory matters that proceed from the animal *per necessitatem* (*bi l-ijab*). [It follows then that] belief in the benefit and the longing [of actions] occurs involuntarily followed by assured desire after which the agent faculty provides it with a necessary impetus. These matters are ordered according to necessity. As for animals, actions motivated by free choice are an expression of knowledge and desire, which is dependent on it [that is, knowledge] (*tabi' lahu*); knowledge is cause of actions. Power [of animals] is an expression of it [that is, knowledge and its dependent, namely, desire].

As for those who make desire different from the will, and who draw distinction between them as noted earlier, the relation of concomitance demands from those [people that] they hold the consumption of repulsive but health-benefiting foods, by the one who knows the benefit [of the foods] but consumes them grudgingly, to be something that proceeds without desire (*min ghayr shawq*); and [similarly, the relation of concomitance demands that] the consumption of delicious but health-harming, by the one who knows the harms [of the foods], to be something that proceeds from the consumer [of food] without will; [in the former scenario] the inclination of [bodily] appetite is repudiated, previously termed natural inclination in the first [scenario] and the repudiation of the will in the second [scenario]. . . . It follows then that the starting origins of voluntary actions are not five [in number].

If you say [in objection]:

How, then, will recompensation and punishment (*al-thawab wa-l-'iqab*) be ascertained (*yatahaqqaq*)? This is akin to the [scenario] whereby a person compels another person to act, then some persons will be punished, while others receive recompense.

I say [in response]:

It has been decisively determined (*taqarrara*) among the ranks of the Folk of Truth [and Verification] that recompense and punishment is not due to some prior desert (*istihqaq*); and not one among the bondsmen (*'ibad*) [of God] has a right of desert over God, exalted is He, such that [they will say] the impediment of it [that is, recompense and punishment] makes it [an act of] oppression. Indeed God is much too exalted than that. As for what the Mu'tazilis disseminate through discussion that the bondsman voluntarily performs [acts of] obedience and disobedience, and deserves recompense and punishment, and on account of this the bondsman deserves recompense and punishment; however, this [view] does not receive the support of the Folk of Truth and Verification (*ahl al-haqq wa-l-tahqiq*). As for the established [doctrine of] acquisition (*kasb*) of al-Ash'ari it is an expression of the association (or bond) (*ta'alluq*) of the power of the bondsman with [the performed] action without it [that is, power] having any influence [over the action]; for in his view [that is, al-Ash'ari] there is no influencer (*mu'aththir*) save God, exalted is He. This is the distinction between his method of composition (*madhhab*) and that of the Mu'tazilis. For them [that is, the Mu'tazilis] the power of the bondsman is capable of influencing, and by establishing another incapable of influencing power their [method of composition] is differentiated from that of the al-Jabbariya. The obligating the incapable (*taklif al-'ajiz*) is not something actual (*waqi'*), whereas the obligating of the powerful is, even though his power is incapable of influencing. This is not at all connected to divine compulsion (*jabr*).

As for the will of God in the view of the philosophers, it [describes] His most complete and perfect (*al-atamm al-akmal*) knowledge of the order of all things (*nizam al-kull*). As has been repeatedly stated and firmly established, this knowledge is power (*qudra*), insofar as contingents can come forth from Him; and [this knowledge] is will (*irada*), insofar as it [that is, knowledge] is sufficient to bring about their [that is, contingents] existence—as well as being a preponderant of one of the limits [or alternatives] (*taraf*) of their existence over [the other limit of] their nonexistence.

And they [that is, the philosophers] have mentioned that in our case [that is, humans] knowledge becomes a cause for external existence. For instance, take the one who walks along the narrow edge of an elevated wall. If the person imagines [the idea of] falling [through the internal power of estimation (*wahm*)], the [false] imagination (*tawahhum*) will become a cause for his falling.

NOTES

I am thankful to my friend and colleague Matthew Melvin-Koushki for his assiduous reading of an earlier draft of this essay.

1. Briefly, Jalal al-Din Muhammad b. Sa'd Kaziruni, popularly known as Muhaqqiq-i Davani, or simply Davani, was born in Davan near Kazirun near the city of Shiraz in 1426. His philosophical and theological training took place in Shiraz too. He became renowned as a masterful exponent of both the rational and transmitted sciences and

occupied the office of *qadi* of the province of Fars during the reign of the Aq-Qoyunlu dynasty. He died soon after the Safavids took power in 1501 or 1502 and was buried in Davan. In the biographical and historiographical sources, Davani is often identified as a savant and one of the principal revivers of Avicennan philosophy in the late medieval period. Indeed the breadth and depth of Davani's writings reveal him to be a doyen who mastered an array of philosophical disciplines, including Peripatetic philosophy, illuminationist philosophy, Ash'ari theology, lettrism, Qur'anic hermeneutics, legal methodology (*usul al-fiqh*), and logic. On Davani's life, works, and general outlines of his thought, see Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari, *Majalis al-mu'minin* (Tehran, 1998), 2:221–30; Qutb al-Din Muhammad 'Ali Ishkavari Lahiji, *Mahbub al-qulub*, ed. Hamid al-Dibaji (Tehran, 2003), 2:463–67; 'Ali Davani, *Sharh-i zindigi-yi Jalal al-Din Davani* (Qum, 1975); Bakhtiyar Husain Siddiqi, "Jalal al-Din Dawwani," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. Mian Mohammad Sharif (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1963–1966), 2:883–88; Harun Anay, *Celeleddin Devvani Hayati* (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 1994), 42–52; Harun Anay, "Devvani," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1994), 9:257–62; Mahdi Dihbashi, "Tahlili az andishaha-yi falsafi va kalami-yi Jalal al-Din Muhaqqiq-i Davani," *Khirdnama-yi Sadra* 1, no. 3 (1996), 41–51; Reza Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 87f, 88–93, 100, 102, 104f; Ghulam Husayn Ibrahim Dinani, *Jalal al-Din Davani filsuf-i zawq al-ta'alluh* (1390; Tehran, 2012). On Davani's political theology, see Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 210–23; Murtada Yusuffirad, *Andisha-yi siyasi Jalal al-Din Davani* (1378; Qum, 2008). For an annotated bibliography of Davani's writings, see Reza Pourjavady, "Kitab-shinasi-I athar-i Jalal al-Din Davani," *Ma'arif* 15 (1998), 81–138; Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, 4–14. See also Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Mudarris, *Rayhanat al-adab: Dar tarajim-i ahval-i ma'rufin bi-kunya aw-laqab ya kunan va-alqab* (Tehran, 1967), 2:232–36; Andrew Newman, "Davani," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (New York: Mazda, 1979–). More recently, see Ahab Bdaiwi, *Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna: An Intellectual History of the Dashtaki Philosophers of Shiraz* (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2014), 44–48. For a detailed account of the philosophy and philosophical theology of Davani, see Ahab Bdaiwi, *Jalal al-Din Davani: An Avicennan Philosopher and Ash'ari Theologian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

2. Very rarely has modern scholarship explored the reception of Davani in Ottoman intellectual circles. On the influence of Davani in the Ottoman world, see Sherif Mardin, "The Mind of the Turkish Reformer, 1700–1900," *Western Humanities Review* 14 (1960), 418ff. For a more recent treatment with some useful notes on the reception of Davani's philosophical writings in Ottoman lands, see Khaled el-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 38ff.
3. Judith Pfeiffer, "Teaching the Learned: Jalal al-Din al-Davani's *Ijaza* to Mu'ayyadzada 'Abd al-Rahman Efendi and the Ottoman Empire at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century," in *The Heritage of Arabo-Islamic Learning: Studies Presented to Wadad Kadi*, ed. M. Pomerantz and A. Shahin (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 284–332, at 296f.

4. Pfeiffer, "Teaching the Learned," 297.
5. Matthew Melvin-Koushki is leading the charge in dissecting, translating, and contextualizing Davani's occultist writings and ideas; see his *The Occult Science of Empire in Aqquyunlu-Safavid Iran: Two Shirazi Lettrists* (Leiden: forthcoming).
6. On the reception of Davani and other Iranian philosophers and theologians in India, see Asad Ahmed and Reza Pourjavady, "Theology in the Indian Subcontinent," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 606–24.
7. On Mu'ayyadzade Efendi, see Ahmad b. Mustafa Taskopruzade, *al-Shaq'a'iq al-nu'maniyya fi 'ulama' al-dawla al-'uthmaniyya* (Beirut, 1975), 280f; Hasan Aksoy, "Mueyyedzade Abdurrahman Efendi," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 2006), 31:485–86, at 485; Pfeiffer, "Teaching the Learned," 286–93.
8. Muslih al-Din Lari, "Mir'at al-adwar wa-mirqat al-akhbar: fasl-i dar sharh hal-i buzurgan-i Khorasan va Mawara' al-nahr va Fars," ed. 'Arif Nawshahi, *Ma'arif* 13, no. 2 (1997): 91–113, at 104; Anay, "Devvani," 9:261. Davani issued an *ijaza* (extant) to Mu'ayyadzade on 11 Jumada I 888/June 17, 1483. See Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, 12.
9. Pfeiffer, "Teaching the Learned," 292.
10. Ahmad Tuysirkani, *Sab' rasa'il* (1381; Tehran, 2003), 35, 41f; Muhammad Barakat, *Kitab-shinasi-yi falsafi-yi maktab-i Shiraz* (Shiraz, 2004), 33, 59, 104. On Davani's poetry, see Husayn 'Ali Mahfuz, *Shi'r-i farsi-yi Jalal al-Din Davani* (Baghdad, 1973).
11. Broadly, I understand the Timurid period as beginning c. 1370, that is, when Timur (r. 1370–1405) conquered large parts of Central Asia, primarily Transoxiana and Khorasan, where he was recognized as ruler over them, as well as his sacking of western Anatolia and the Levant, until the rise and consolidation of the Safavids in the early decades of the 1500s.
12. On later Ash'arism in Iran, and its gradual decline, see Bdaiwi, *Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna*, 37–48. For brief introductions on the main exponents of later Ash'ari theology in Iran in the Timurid period, including English translation of key excerpts of major works, see S. H. Nasr and M. Aminrazavi, eds., *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, vol. 3, *Philosophical Theology in the Middle Ages and Beyond from Mu'tazili to Ash'ari to Shi'i Texts* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 249–366.
13. For a brief survey of other intellectual and philosophical trends in Iran in the late medieval period, see Bdaiwi, *Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna*, 13–26. Modern studies have yet to sufficiently investigate the fate of the later Ash'ari tradition in Iran in the late medieval period. That later Ash'arism faded out some time after the rise of the Safavids is, indeed, the prevailing and standard account. A detailed analysis, however, is as of yet lacking. At this stage of our knowledge, we can only offer, for the most part, impressionistic remarks (which can carry value if they succeed in directing attention to unconsciously neglected areas of research) partly based on the limited number of recent studies and partly on the preliminary findings of forthcoming studies:

First, evidence indicate that Davani was the last major representative of the later Ash'ari tradition in Iran; subsequent philosophizing Ash'ari thinkers, such as Muslih al-Din Lari and Habib Allah Baghnawi, were much influenced by Davani's philosophical

thinking and were indeed self-proclaimed intellectual disciples of Davani. Both Lari and Baghnawi left Iran to settle elsewhere as the sociopolitical milieu in Iran could no longer accommodate the presence of Sunni thinkers. Compare Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*; Dinani, *Jalal al-Din Davani filsuf-i zawq al-ta'alluh*; Bdaiwi, *Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna*.

Second, later Safavid historians, such as Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1626), portray Davani and his intellectual disciples as the last major Ash'ari current in Iran after the arrival of the Safavids. See Muhammad Amin Astarabadi, *al-Fawa'id al-madaniya*, ed. Rahmat Allah al-Araki (Qum, 2003), 500.

Third, another indication that Ash'ari activity in its later form was on the decline at the turn of the fifteenth century is found in a statement of Fakhr al-Din Sammaki (d. 1576), who described his teacher, Sadr al-Din Dashtaki, as the "one who defeated the Ash'ari theologians [in Iran]" (Fakhr al-Din Sammaki, "Tafsir ayat al-kursi," ed. 'Ali Rida Bahardust, *Afaq-i Nur* 9 [2009]: 395–448, at 439, 444).

Fourth, the later intellectual disciples of Dashtaki, Shams al-Din Khafri (d. 1535), Najm al-Din Nayrizi (d. 1541), and Sammaki, known for their opposition to Ash'ari philosophizing and promotion of philosophical Shi'ism, singled Davani out as the last major Ash'ari figure in Iran, rarely if ever acknowledging the existence of any worthwhile post-Davani Ash'ari thinking. On Khafri, see Shushtari, *Majalis al-mu'minin*, 2:233ff; George Saliba, "A Sixteenth-Century Arabic Critique of Ptolemaic Astronomy: The Work of Shams al-Din al-Khafri," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 25 (1994): 15–38; Firouzeh Saatchian, *Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken: Ontologie und Kosmologie im Denken von Sams al-Din Muhammad al-Hafri* (Berlin, 2011); Ahab Bdaiwi, "Some Remarks on the Confessional Identity of the Philosophers of Shiraz: Sadr al-Din Dashtaki (d. 1498) and His Students Mulla Shams al-Din Khafri (d. 1535) and Najm al-Din Mahmud Nayrizi (d. 1541)," *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 5 (2014): 61–85, at 75–83; Bdaiwi, *Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna*, 106–17. On Nayrizi, see Muhammad Baqir Khwansari, *Rawdat al-jannat fi ahwal al-'ulama' wa l-sadat*, 7 vols. (Beirut, 1991), 186f; Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*; Bdaiwi, "Some Remarks on the Confessional Identity of the Philosophers of Shiraz," 83–85; Bdaiwi, *Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna*, 117–20.

Fifth, a recent study has shown that Davani, insofar as he is a philosophizing Ash'ari thinker, was one of the last major luminaries of this tradition in Iran; philosophizing Ash'aris in post-Davani Iran were, as argued by Dinani, few and far in between (Dinani, *Jalal al-Din Davani*, 431ff).

Sixth, when compared with the first generation of Safavid philosophers, second and third generation philosophers in the Safavid period, such as the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-centuries thinkers Mir Damad (d. 1631) and Mulla Sadra (d. 1635), devote little attention to Ash'ari *kalam* and even less effort to critically engage with its theological commitments. This, perhaps, is an indication of the inconspicuousness of the Ash'ari tradition in the later Safavid period, and something to which the manuscript evidence attests. For example, the paucity of manuscripts on Ash'ari *kalam* or by Ash'ari theologians listed in the Safavid catalogs paint a very dim picture and seem to lend credence to the argument that after the sixteenth century there was little interest in the Ash'ari tradition in Safavid scholarly circles.

14. I was very cautious of the declinist thesis popular in modern scholarship until recently. Nowadays modern scholarship is making considerable headway digging up intellectual gems and bringing to light intellectual trends, traditions, and ideas from the postclassical period. Be that as it may, one can still argue with some justification that Mongol and post-Mongol intellectual history in the central and eastern lands of Islam, with few notable exceptions, has gone largely unnoticed in modern scholarship. This neglect is particularly true of its development during the period between the later decades of the thirteenth century and the emergence of the so-called School of Isfahan in Iran. A major reason for this neglect is that many works and intellectual outputs of this period were written in the style of commentaries, supercommentaries, glosses, superglosses, and abridgments. As such, they are considered unoriginal compositions that are unworthy of the modern scholar's attention. On this tendency in Islamic intellectual history, see Dimitri Gutas, "The Heritage of Avicenna: the Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000-ca. 1350," in *Avicenna and His Heritage*, ed. J. Janssens and D. de Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press 1999), 81–97; Asad Q. Ahmed, "Post-Classical Philosophical Commentaries/Glosses: Innovations in the Margins," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 317–48; Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin, "The Hashiya and Islamic Intellectual History," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 213–16; Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the *Isharat*," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 349–78.
15. Later philosophizing Ash'ari thinkers, such as Muslih al-Din Lari and Habib Allah Baghnawi, were much influenced by Davani philosophical thinking and were self-proclaimed intellectual disciples of Davani. Both Lari and Baghnawi left Iran to settle elsewhere as the sociopolitical milieu in Iran could no longer accommodate the presence of Sunni thinkers. Lari entered the service of the Mughal court, where he was warmly received, then moved to Constantinople in 1560, during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566). Once in Constantinople Lari took up the mantle of teaching at the madrasa of Khusraw Pasha and, while there, authored a number of works. Baghnawi became *persona non grata* after the death of Shah Isma'il II (r. 1576–1578), forcing him to move to India. On Lari, see Hanna Sohrweide, 'al-Lari', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. Hamilton Rosskeen Gibb et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1954–2004); Reza Pourjavady, "Muslih al-Din al-Lari and His Sample of the Sciences," *Oriens* 42 (2014): 292–322. On Baghnawi, see Reza Pourjavady, "Baghnawi, Habiballah," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Marc Gaborieau, Roger Allen, and Gudrun Kraämer (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
16. El-Rouayheb, "Baghnawi, Habiballah." For studies on Ottoman intellectual history, see Mehmed Serafeddin Yaltkaya, "Turk Kelamcıları," *Darulfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 23 (1931): 1–19, a useful although dated study on Turkish theologians; Bursalı Mehmet Tahir, *Osmanlı muellifleri: Osmanlıların zuhurundan zamanımıza kadar gelen ve mesleklerinde eser yazan Türk mesayih, ulema, suera ve udeba, muverrihin, etibba, riyaziyun ve coğrafıyunun muhtasar tercumei halleriyle eserlerine dair malumati kafi havidir* (Istanbul, 1914) is an immensely useful bio-bibliography that includes many entries on philosophers and theologians and relevant philosophical works from the Ottoman period; Katib Chelebi, *The Balance of Truth*, trans. Geoffrey L. Lewis

(London, 1957); Ismail Hakkı Uzuncarsılı, *Osmanlı devletinin ilmiye teşkilatı* (Ankara, 1965); Madeline Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988); Huseyin Atay, *Osmanlılarda Yusek Din Egitimi* (Istanbul, 1983); F. Jamil Ragep, “Freeing Astronomy from Philosophy: An Aspect of Islamic Influence on Science,” *Osiris* 16 (2001): 49–71; Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, “Institutionalisation of Science in the Medreses of Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Turkey,” in *Turkish Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, ed. G. Irzık and G. Guzeldere (Dordrecht, 2005), 265–84; Ayman Shihadeh, “Khojazada on al-Ghazali’s Criticism of the Philosophers’ Proof of the Existence of God,” in *International Symposium on Khojazada (22–24 October 2010 Bursa): Proceedings*, ed. T. Yucedogru et al. (Bursa, 2011), 141–61; M. Sait Ozervarli, “Theology in the Ottoman Lands,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. S. Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 567–86; Sait Ozervarli, “Arbitrating Between al-Ghazzali and the Philosophers: The Tahafut Commentaries in the Ottoman Intellectual Context,” in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazzali. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, ed. G. Tamer, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 375–97.

17. El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah.”
18. El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 38. In fact there is some evidence that the philosophical writings of Davani were circulated in Ottoman lands in the early decades of the sixteenth century. As noted previously, the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul contains no fewer than 891 copies of works by, or related to, Davani. In the catalogs of Iranian libraries I have counted approximately 424 manuscript copies of works by Davani.
19. El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 38.
20. His full name is ‘Abd al-Rahim b. Muhammad, known in the bio-bibliographical literature as *Osmanlı seyhulislami* (or, *mufti al-dawla al-Uthmaniyya*). See Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar fi a’yan al-qarn al-hadi ‘ashar* (Cairo, 1867), 2:411f; Mehmet Ipsirli, “Abdurrahim Efendi, Hoca,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1994), vol. 1, 289; El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 42.
21. His full name is Ibrahim b. Hasan b. Shihab al-Din al-Kurani, sometimes known as Burham al-Din, al-Shahrūzi, al-Kurdi, and al-Madani. The sources describe him as *imam al-a’imma wa-hibr al-milla, abu l-irfan, al-muhaqqiq al-sufi*, and *faqih al-sufiyya wa-sufi al-fuqaha’* (the Sufi jurist par excellence). We learn much about Kurani and his intellectual learning and pedagogical lineages in his *al-amam li-iqaz al-himam* (lithographed in Hyderabad in 1910). To date (and to the best of my knowledge) thirty-two works of Kurani survive in manuscript form. In recent times, Kurani was the subject of a detailed study by ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. ‘Abd Allah al-Ghizzi. The famous *maghrebi* jurist-traveler Abu Salim al-‘Ayyashi (d. 1679) who met Kurani in Medina records one of the earliest external contemporaneous bio-bibliographical and intellectual accounts of Kurani in his famous travelogue in the years 1661 to 1663. See ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad al-‘Ayyashi, *al-Rihla al-‘Ayyashiyya*, ed. S. al-Fadli and S. al-Qarashi (Abu Zabi, 2006), vol. 1, 478–87. See also Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Baqi al-Hanbali al-Ba’li al-Dimashqi (d. 1714), *Mashyakhat Abi l-Mawahib al-Hanbali*, ed. M. M. al-Hafiz (Beirut, 1990), 102–104; ‘Umar Rida Kahlala, *Mu’jam al-mu’allifin* (Beirut, 1957), 1:46; Recep Cici,

- “Ebu’l-Irfan (Ebu Ishak) Burhanuddin Ibrahim b. Hasen b. Sihabiddin el-Kurani es-Shehzuri,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1994), 26:426f; El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 51.
22. Details of Tefsiri Mehmed can be found in the useful but little-used Ottoman-era bio-bibliographical work, *Waqa’i’ al-fudala’*, by Muhammad Shaykhi Afandi (d. 1731). Shaykhi Afandi includes hundreds of entries on Ottoman scholars. The *Waqa’i’* was the subject of a detailed monographic study by Ali Ugur, *The Ottoman ‘ulema in the Mid-17th Century: An Analysis of the Vaka’i’ ul-fuzala of Mehmed Seyhi* (Berlin, 1986). On Tefsiri Mehmed, see Seyhi Mehmed Efendi, *Vekayiu’l-fudala, Sakaik-ı nu’maniye ve zeyilleri* 3–4, vol. 2, ed. Abdulkadir Ozcan (Istanbul, 1989); El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 47f.
 23. On him and the Husaynabadi family of philosophers and theologians, as well as the centrality of Davani in their philosophical thinking, see Florian Schwarz, “Writing in the margins of empires—the Husaynabadi family of scholiasts in the Ottoman-Safavid borderlands,” in *Buchkultur im Nahen Osten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Tobias Heinzelmann and Henning Sievert (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010); El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 49f.
 24. El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 53. The biographical literature in Turkish recognize Ḥadimi (Khadimi) primarily as a Sufi and jurist (*fakih ve mutasavvıf*), secondarily as philosopher. See Mustafa Yayla, “Hadimi, Ebu Said,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1994), 15:24–26.
 25. Isma‘il b. Mustafa b. Mahmud, also known as Gelenbevi, or Kalanbawi, was a celebrated Ottoman logician, theologian, philosopher, astronomer, mathematician, and commentator. He was recognized officially as a *muderris* (professor) in 1763 and held classes in the presence of the Ottoman sultan in the month of Ramadan, known commonly as *huzur dersleri*. His major contributions in philosophy include detailed discussions on existence and contingency, as well as thorough commentaries on the writings of Athir al-Din Abhari (d. 1265) and Muslih al-Din Lari. His most famous work on logic is *al-Burhan fi fann al-mantiq wa-‘ilm al-mizan*. See M. Sait Ozervarli, “Gelenbevi, Ismail,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. K. Fleet, G. Kramer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, and E. Rowson (Leiden: Brill, 2007). On Gelenbevi logical and philosophical ideas, see Abdulkuddus Bingol, *Gelenbevi’nin mantık anlayışı* (Istanbul, 1992); Ahmet Akguc, *Ismail Gelenbevi’de varlık dusuncesi* (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2006); Rifat Okudan, *Gelenbevi ve Vahdet-i vücud* (Isparta, 2006).
 26. ‘Isam al-Din Isma‘il b. Muhammad al-Qunawi, or Konevi, renowned as an exegete and author of the famous *hashiya* on the Qur’anic commentary of al-Baydawi (d. probably 1286), published as Isma‘il al-Qunawi, *Hashiyat al-Qunawi ‘ala tafsir al-imam al-Baydawi* (Beirut, 2001). See also Kahhala, *Mu‘jam al-mu‘allifin*, 2:294; ‘Ata Allah Sa‘id al-Nasasira, *al-Janib al-ilahi fi hashiyat al-Qunawi ‘ala tafsir al-Baydawi li l-imam ‘Isam al-Din Isma‘il b. Muhammad al-Hanafı al-Qunawi al-mutawaffa sanat 1196 AH* (master’s thesis, University of Jordan, 2008).
 27. Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, 111n65.
 28. *Asnad va mukatabat-i tarikhi-yi Iran az Timur ta Shah Isma‘il*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Nava‘i (Tehran, 1963), 254–58.

29. Shushtari, *Majalis al-mu'minin*, vol. 2, 225.
30. Shushtari, *Majalis al-mu'minin*; Tuysirkani, *Sab' rasa'il*, 47.
31. That in the view of Dashtaki and his students the *Old Treatise* did not contain philosophically probative force is further affirmed by Nayrizi in his commentary, completed in 1515, on the work. See Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, 129–31.
32. Based on the edition in Tuysirkani, *Sab' rasa'il*, 115–70.
33. Tuysirkani, *Sab' rasa'il*, 47f.
34. El-Rouayheb, “Baghnawi, Habiballah,” 40f.

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III. Philosophy and Legal Theory

THE MUSALLAM AL-THUBUT OF MUHIBBALLAH
AL-BIHARI AND ITS COMMENTARY
BY 'ABD AL-'ALI BAHR AL-'ULUM

ASAD Q. AHMAD

Islamic legal theory in the postclassical period (c. 1200–1900) bears a heavy influence from the philosophical tradition. In these later texts, a number of canonical issues are problematized anew and receive novel treatments and resolutions. Often the reinvestigation of old topics is driven by a consideration of some fine and technical point of philosophy that is brought into conversation with an existing set of concerns and principles of legal theory. The truth and value of the philosophical points often are taken for granted on the basis of their investigation in their separate and disciplinary venue; thus the influence is usually unidirectional, moving from philosophical texts to legal theoretical ones. Consequently and generally, the lens of philosophy does not seem to lead to new growth in the discipline of philosophy within the ambit of the text of legal theory; nor are issues of legal theory generally imported and considered within the discipline of philosophy. The complication for issues of legal theory that are posed by the importation of philosophy are usually resolved by the rearticulation of the original topic of legal theory or by appeal to the specificity of the legal issue such that it is taken to stand as an exception to the philosophical point, or by the deployment of other philosophical stratagems that neutralize the problem. The resolution is generally not achieved by appeal to scriptural source bases.

THE CONTENTS OF THE TEXTS

The texts presented here—a base text and its commentary—are fine examples of the aforementioned state of affairs (moving forward in the analysis, I shall not distinguish

between the base text and the commentary or between their respective authors). The text concerns the well-known legal-theological issue of disobedience to divine commands. At its base, the question was whether, given divine foreknowledge and the concomitant and determined outcome of events, a person could be meaningfully expected to obey a divine command. Put differently, if God already knows the outcome, does the demand to obey His command make any sense? In assessing this matter, a foundational scriptural-based principle that the tradition of legal theory appealed to was that God would not burden a soul with that which lies outside its capacity. Thus, if a command in a system that grants divine foreknowledge produces a burden upon the subject that lies outside his capacity, such a command cannot be obeyed. Consequently, a person cannot be burdened with its injunctions.

The elements of this problem constitute the starting point of the discussion. The underlying assumption here is that what lies outside the capacity of the subject is impossible in some way with respect to him. This act of assessing incapacity via the concept of impossibility is rather deliberate. It allows the author to launch directly into the central discussion of the modality of impossibility as gleaned from philosophical texts: something may be impossible in itself or possible in itself, but impossible through some other cause. An example of the former is the joining of two contradictories and, of the latter, that the sun should go around the earth. For whereas the former is a logical impossibility and not so due to something other than itself, the latter is an impossibility given the attendant set of causes and effects and the concomitant existential state of affairs. In other words, there is nothing impossible in itself (*per se*) about the sun going around the earth; it is only a set and series of causes that precludes this possibility from actually being realized.

Now the author is not so much troubled should a divine command be impossible to obey due to something other than itself. This would be like the case of obligating someone to carry a mountain; this is not an impossibility in itself, either with respect to any power or with respect to the power of the obligated (the latter two would be like the joining of two contradictories and the creation of atoms by humans, respectively). The claim seems to rest on the idea that, in itself, there is nothing in the nature of human capacity as such that precludes the possibility of his lifting a mountain, though it so happens that God's regular habit precludes such things from happening. Such a concession to an impossible obligation is granted on a merely rational basis, that is, on the basis of the consideration of the modalities in question, but it is also precluded by the author on the basis of the scriptural guarantee that a person would not be obligated with that of which he is incapable.

This brings one to the more fundamental issue of that which is impossible in itself. Can a command demanding the actualization of such impossibilities be materially or formally correct? The author precludes such impossibilities from the domain of divine commands on both counts. In material terms, this would require the impossible to be something that can be conceptualized, a position that is generally rejected in the philosophical literature (but one that also led to a long tradition of disquisitions about impossible subject terms and absurd statements in

the field of logic). Surely one cannot conceptualize a square circle. As a mere formal articulation, one could certainly give an impossible command. However, given that materially such a command is nonsensical (though its meaning can be apprehended), God would not give it; otherwise, he would be deficient.

However, this excision of impossible commands from the purview of the obligated human now leads to a host of other problems. For example, if one were to grant divine omniscience, then surely commands would have no meaning with respect to the disobedient human being. For God already knows that the disobedient person will not bring about what he is commanded, so that the command is impossible with respect to him. If it is possible with respect to him, then such obedience is contrary to God's knowledge; but what is contrary to His knowledge is impossible. Hence no disobedient person can be commanded to obey a divine injunction, as this would be to command the impossible. Alternatively, the author would have to side with those who hold that one can be commanded to obey the impossible; this is a concession he is not willing to make. Given the divisions of the impossible outlined above, the solution offered is rather straightforward: the impossibility in question is not *per se*. As such, the command demands something that is possible on rational grounds, impossible only on the grounds that God will not actualize this possibility. In modal terms then, such a command pertains to that which is possible in itself, impossible through another.

It seems then that only commands of bringing about that which is impossible *per se* are problematic. Are there such commands given to those who will be disobedient? In this case, the example of the prototypical disobedient human, Abu Jahl, is mentioned. Abu Jahl was commanded by God to believe. To do so would be to grant assent to the truth of all of what Muhammad brought forth. However, one of the things that Muhammad declared was that Abu Jahl would never believe. Thus for Abu Jahl to grant assent to all of what Muhammad stated would include believing that he would never believe. In other words, granting assent to the truth of the message would entail not granting assent to it. This is an absurdity, much in the manner of those propositions in the field of logic whose truth value oscillates indefinitely. (Indeed there is little doubt that the treatment of the question of Abu Jahl's belief in this manner is guided by concerns of propositional truth conditions in the case of paradoxes.) The solution offered by the author is inspired by a tool from the field of logic: Abu Jahl can be said to grant assent to the truth of Muhammad's claims insofar as these claims are compressed, not insofar as they are expressed. He may state that the whole series of claims Muhammad made are true insofar as they can be represented by one proposition *p* ("Muhammad's claims are true," where "Muhammad's claims" are the subject and "true" the predicate), but not with respect to the content of each instance of the subject of the proposition ("God is one," "Muhammad is his prophet," "Abu Jahl will never believe"). In this way, Abu Jahl can indeed grant assent to Muhammad's claims without falling into an absurd impossibility. This is one way to offer a philosophical-logical solution to a legal-theological problem that is problematized in philosophical terms.

THE WRITERS AND THE WORKS

The translated text is from the field of legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*) and was written by a celebrated seventeenth-century scholar, Muhibballah al-Bihari. The lines in *italics* are the base text (*matn*), called *Musallam al-thubut*; those in roman are the commentary, *Fawatih al-rahamut*, by a well-known scholar of the eighteenth century, ‘Abd al-‘Ali Bahr al-‘Ulum.

Muhibballah b. ‘Abd Shakur al-Bihari was born and raised in Kara in Bihar, India. He was a Hanafi scholar who began to gain fame for his legal scholarship in the reign of the Mughal emperor Awrangzib (r. 1658–1707). Under the Awrangzib’s patronage, al-Bihari served as the *qadi* of Lucknow and Hyderabad; he was also appointed as a private tutor for the emperor’s grandson Rafi‘ al-Qadr (d. 1712). Toward the end of his life, al-Bihari was also appointed by Shah ‘Alam (r. 1707–1712) to the central ministry and given the title Fadil Khan. Little more has been communicated in the sources about al-Bihari’s life. He was a student of Qutb al-Din Sihlavi (d. 1692), the fountainhead of the Farangi Mahalli tradition of scholars, and by Qutb al-Din Shamsabadi (d. 1709). His scholarly work seems to be limited to legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*), logic, and philosophy. The legal theory work presented here and his logic work, *Sullam al-‘ulum*, were both included in the *madrasa* tradition of South Asia as advanced textbooks. The *Musallam* was written in 1698 and is a detailed and technical exposition of Hanafi *usul* presented in comparison to the Shafi‘i tradition.

The commentator of the *Musallam*, ‘Abd al-‘Ali b. Nizam al-Din Bahr al-‘Ulum, was the grandson of Qutb al-Din Sihlavi, the aforementioned teacher of al-Bihari. A leading scholar of the eighteenth century, he was a specialist in law, legal theory, logic, philosophy, and theology. Bahr al-‘Ulum was born in Lucknow (c. 1723) and received his early training from his father. He was also a renowned Sufi of the Qadiri order and was considered a *mujtahid* by Hanafi scholars of his time. As a leading light of his generation from a prominent scholarly family, he enjoyed the patronage of a number of princely states of India throughout his life; some of his financial support came from the British East India Company. Bahr al-‘Ulum wrote mainly in Arabic and Persian, including several commentaries and glosses on influential *madrasa* books on philosophy and logic.

TRANSLATION

BEGINNING OF NEW SECTION (PAGE 99)

It is not possible for one to be obligated of that which is impossible in itself in an absolute sense, [that is,] in itself, not with respect to a power to the exclusion of another. [An example is] the union of two opposites. Or [obligation is not possible

with respect to] that which cannot issue due to itself *from the one obligated*, though it may be possible in relation to the power of God, such as the creation of a substance/atom by a temporally created power.

The Asharites allowed one to be obligated with that which is impossible in itself in both the aforementioned ways. However, they differed [on the question] of its actual coming about [that is, on the question when such obligation will actually befall people]. For among them there are those who say that [such an obligation] does actually occur; and there are those who say that it does not. *As for that which is impossible as a [mere] regularity*, that is, that which is possible in itself and with a view to the power of the one obligated, but which does not issue from the one obligated as [a fact of mere] regularity, *such as someone's carrying a mountain*, well obligating one [of something like this] *is allowed*, as far as we are concerned. [This is allowed by us on the basis of] *rational [consideration]*, *as opposed to* [the position] *of the Mutazilites*. For the latter do not hold it to be allowed on the basis of rational [consideration]. [However,] for us, *on the basis of a scriptural proof*, *it is not allowed* [that this last type of impossibility should be someone's obligation]. *This is due to God the High's statement*, "God will only obligate a soul [with something] *that is within its capacity*." Now consensus is formed that one can soundly be obligated by that which God knows will not actually occur, although this [thing] that will not occur should be impossible due to something other than itself. Indeed in the *Sharh al-sharh* [one finds the claim that the consensus is that such an obligation is not only soundly possible,] but also that it [has already] actually occurred. *Our position is that if it is sound* that one should be obligated with that which is impossible, *then it is also something that is called for/sought*. [This is so] because this is the meaning of obligating someone. *Calling for/seeking something depends on the conceptualization of its actual occurrence, just as it is called for/sought. Otherwise*, that is, if this [thing] that is called for/sought is not conceptualized, *that [thing] would not be conceptualized; rather something else would be. And this is necessary*. Thus the claim that "if obligating someone with what is impossible is allowed, then [the impossible] would be conceptualized as it is called for/sought, that is, insofar as it occurs actually" has been excluded [as a possibility]. *The conceptualization of the actual occurrence of that which is absurd, insofar as it is absurd,*] and is known as absurd/impossible, *in the extramental [world] is incorrect/false by necessity*. So allowing that one can be obligated with that which is absurd/impossible is incorrect. If you were to say that this proof is [set up] in opposition to necessity, since there is no absurdity if one were to say to the obligated, "Bring about the union of two contraries or the absurd!"—then [the author] would say that *this*, which we mentioned, *pertains to obligating and calling for* [something] *in the real [sense]*.

As for obligating someone *in the [merely] formal sense*—which is something other than a real calling for something—*such that one articulates* [something verbally] *in the form of the command and states*, "Bring about the absurd!" or "Bring forth the union of contradictories!" *well this is nothing other than like your saying*, "The union of two contradictories actually exists!" For as a content-bearing statement

in reality this [statement] is incorrect, although its verbal articulation is correct. Similarly, in this case, the calling for [the impossible] is incorrect, although the verbal articulation in the form of a command is correct. We do not hold that this verbal articulation is impossible, given this proof. In the discourse of the people of truth *one adheres to the position of the impossibility* [of this articulation] *due to some other thing that is apprehended* that indicates [its impossibility]. *If* this thing that is apprehended *is granted, so is granted* the impossibility of this articulation. This other thing that is apprehended is that the articulation of that whole meaning is not intended is stupidity and jest. And this is impossible with respect to God. [Thus] obligating someone with that which is impossible/absurd is an impossible deficiency with respect to God. And this thing that is apprehended [and that leads to the aforementioned conclusion] includes both the formal and real [obligation], except that it is specific to God's obligating someone. *So reflect on this!*

PAGE 101, LINE 19FF

They say first that if obligating someone with that which is impossible were not correct, [such an obligation] would not actually occur. But it has already occurred, because the disobedient person is commanded [with obligations]. Carrying out the act is impossible [for him]. How would this not be so, given that God knows that the act will not actually come about [through his agency]? So [the disobedient person's] bringing about the act is contrary to [His] knowledge. That which is contrary to the knowledge of Him Most high is impossible. So the act from [such a disobedient person] is impossible. Likewise is the knowledge of God Most High of [the disobedient person's] death and of the abrogation [of the command] from him before he is capable of it, since his non-existence is known [to God] and that which is contrary to what is known [by Him] is absurd/impossible. The response is that impossibility per se does not follow from this [consideration]. Nor is the conceptualization of [the act's] actual coming about from [the disobedient person] impossible. Rather [the aforementioned objection only] supplies the point that what is actual is the non-existence of its actual occurrence. It is allowed that its actual occurrence be possible, [but] not actual. Knowledge [itself] does not change anything or endows [it] with possibility. For the knowledge of the possibility of that which is known or of its impossibility is posterior to the thing that is known and is not its cause.

PAGE 102, LINE 1FF

Know that al-Ashari held the doctrine that the power [of the agent to act] exists with the act [and not prior to it] and that the acts of the servants are created by God Most High. So they attributed to Him that He obligates [his creation] with that which is impossible/absurd. As for the first [reason,] well it is because, since the power does not exist in the state of the obligation—which is prior to the act—the act becomes

as undetermined [to exist] and [so it becomes] impossible in relation to the obligated person. As for the second [reason,] well it is because, since the acts of the servants are created by God Most High, they are not determined [to exist] for the servant. So they are impossible with respect to him. Indeed the Asharites take obligating someone of the impossible as an entailed consequence. The truth is that it is not entailed; the inference does not entail [its consequence]. As for the absence of entailment [of the consequence] in the first case, well it is because the power [of the agent] is necessary only at the time of generating, that is, generating the act, so that the obedience may come about; [the power is not necessary] at the time when something is obligated. So with respect to the state of the generation [of the act] one is not obligated with that which is not determined [to exist]. As for the absence of the entailment in the second case, well it is because, for him, that is, al-Ashari, obligating someone is only related to acquisition, as it is also the case for us. And this is an act that is determined [by God] for the servant. [The obligation] is not related to [the servant] bringing something about that is not determined [by God] for him. On this issue, there is a great discourse in the discipline of kalam, mentioning which will extend our discourse. However, one must point out that there is no way out of [this problem] for al-Ashari; [he would be forced] to hold the doctrine that [God can] obligate someone with something that He has not determined [to exist]. For [the servant's] acquisition [of the act] for [al-Ashari] is also from God the High and the servant's power is only imagined. It has no bearing on any of the acts. So reflect on this and judge fairly.

They say, *secondly*, that God obligated Abu Jahl with belief, that is, with granting assent to all of what the Prophet came with. And among it, that is, some of what he came with, is that he will not grant assent to the truth [of Muhammad]. So He obligated him to grant assent to him in that he will not grant assent to him. And this is absurd. How could it not be so, [given that] *it*, that is, granting assent to the [very] granting of assent, *only comes about by means of the denial of granting assent, since if granting the assent existed, the granting of the assent would be known*. [Thus] he would grant assent to it. So how could he grant assent to the absence [of such an assent]. So the granting of assent would entail the absence of the granting of assent; and that which entails [its own] contradictory is absurd in itself. So Abu Jahl is obligated with that which is absurd/impossible in itself.

The response is that Abu Jahl is not obligated except to grant assent to the precepts of divine legislation/narration—that [the Qur'an] is from God, the reports about [Muhammad's] mission, Resurrection, paradise, hell, torments of the grave, intercession, and other things. *The absence of [Abu Jahl's] granting assenting is a report from God to him*, may the blessings of God be upon him, his family, and companions. Abu Jahl is not obligated to grant assent to this report. So he is not obligated to grant assent to the absence of granting assent, so that there is no impossibility [that is entailed].

If you were to say that granting assent to the truth of the legal/divinely ordained reports is also impossible with respect to [Abu Jahl] because it runs contrary to His

report; and that which is contrary [to his report] is impossible/absurd, [the author] would respond: *that which is possible does not fall out of* [the category of] *possibility due to* [someone's] *knowledge or report*. For these latter two only require that that which relates to them should be actually existent, not that it should be necessary. With this extent [of exploration,] the response is complete.

One of them adds that if Abu Jahl knows that he will not believe, then the obligation [to adopt Islam/to believe] falls by the wayside. [This is so] because [otherwise the report about him not believing] does not communicate anything useful. The author is not in agreement with this and states, *that which is said*, [namely,] *that if he knew* that he will not grant assent, *the obligation will fall by the wayside—this is impossible*, that is, false. *For man is not left futilely* in a state; so the obligation would not fall by the wayside forever. He stated in the gloss, “How could [the obligation] fall by the wayside? Even the knowledge of God Most High does not preclude [the obligation] from being something determined [to be so]. So it is more suitable that His informing him of it and the knowledge of the one obligated should not preclude it. So reflect [on this]! Against this [is the objection] that the one who holds the position that the obligation falls by the wayside does not hold the doctrine of the absence of human power [to act]. Rather, he says that the point [of obligating someone] is to test and to [see his] compliance and this does not remain after the one obligated knows that [the obligation will] not be actually [fulfilled]. The author will point to this in the investigations of the fourth section, but the truth is what he mentions here.

NOTES

1. Bahr al-'ulum, 'Abd al-'Ali Muhammad b. Nizam al-Din. *Fawatih al-rahamut bi-sharh Musallam al-thubut li-l-Imam al-Qadi Muhibballah b. 'Abd al-Shukur al-Bihari*, ed. 'Abdallah Mahmud Muhammad 'Umar (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002).

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FIGURE 8.1 Agate amulet

An agate pendant from Iran bearing the 99 names of God (Asma' al-Husna) surrounded by the sura Ya Sin from the Qur'an. The sura and the Divine Names are believed to harbor talismanic powers, providing the owner of the pendant with protection and strength in times of need.

Date: Mid-eighteenth century

Place of origin: Iran

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Elizabeth S. Ettinghausen Gift, in memory of Richard Ettinghausen, Louise E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Persian Heritage Foundation Gift, 2013. 2013.170

8. Lettrists, Alchemists, and Astrologers: The Occult Sciences

In Islamicate intellectual history generally, and the history of science specifically, occultism remains a “wretched subject,” and hence studiously avoided by modern scholars.¹ Post-Enlightenment scientific positivism notwithstanding, however, the occult sciences (*al-‘ulum al-khafiyya* or *al-ghariba*)—astrology, alchemy, and various forms of magic and divination—constituted at least a full half of the natural and mathematical sciences, which is to say the rational sciences, in the premodern Arabo-Persian encyclopedic tradition; they were heavily patronized by ruling and scholarly elites as such. The “occult” in occult science need therefore not be a stumbling block: it simply designates a discipline in which the scientist extrapolates from visible data to invisible, from *zahir* to *batin*. Thus medicine, for example, was often classified as an occult science, in contrast to surgery; indeed, the modern sciences of psychology or astrophysics are by this premodern definition largely occult. At the same time, in the post-Mongol Islamicate world, the occult sciences as an epistemologically coherent subset of the rational sciences were progressively *sanctified* through association with the sacral power (*walaya*) of the Shi‘i imams, and by extension Sufi saints, as well as the text of the Qur’an itself—such that *Islam* became synonymous with *magic* for a majority of Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal scholarly and ruling elites. This occultism-Sufism-Alidism tripod served in turn as the basis of a shared, if contested, Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal universalist imperial culture and its theories of millennial sovereignty.

In the first essay, Matthew Melvin-Koushki takes as a representative example the Safavid occultist Mahmud Dihdar Shirazi (fl. 1576) to suggest the robustness

of this imperial tripod by the sixteenth century. This aspiring Safavid courtier was the most prolific Persian author on lettrism (*'ilm-i huruf*) of that century; his oeuvre, produced for patrons in Iran and India alike and influential for centuries thereafter, is thus indispensable to any study of the occult-scientific imperialism so fundamental to and distinctive of Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal early modernity. A taste of his authorial range and didactic and eulogizing style is provided through translated excerpts from three of his most popular manuals: *Keys to All Locks* (*Mafatih al-Maghaliq*), *Choicest Secrets* (*Zubdat al-Asrar*), and *Choicest Talismans* (*Zubdat al-Alvah*). Most significantly, in the last work Dihdar expressly presents letter magic as a scientific means of *shihizing Iran*—a scholarly-imperial project that was indeed successfully accomplished by Safavid sages and mages by the seventeenth century.

The sixteenth century was thus a pivotal era for the vernacularization of Arabic occult-scientific literature within the Persophone world—as well as the Turkophone parts of the Ottoman Empire. In the particular case of alchemy and related chemical technologies, the second and third quarters of the sixteenth century witnessed the composition of numerous texts by Ottoman scholars in Arabic. Most notably, alchemical writings of the jurist Bostan Efendi of Tire (d. 1569) and the enigmatic 'Ali Chelebi of Iznik (d. after 1575) constituted the foundation upon which later Ottoman alchemist-authors would base their own theoretical and practical works. By the turn of the seventeenth century, a number of widely circulating alchemical texts in the Turkish vernacular had already appeared. The vast majority of these Turkish texts were written in verse, which form a veritable cycle of poems concerning alchemy. These poems are, for the most part, of a technical nature and appropriately use an “artless” language, but one of them, *Sırr-ı Ta-Ha* (The Secret of *Ta-Ha*), is distinguished by its seemingly inscrutable imagery and the diachronic transformation of its author in the manuscript tradition.

In the second essay, Tuna Artun examines and translates this poem. The work's authorship is attributed to a certain Shaykh Safi, whose real identity cannot be fully verified. In the later manuscript tradition, however, this figure often morphs into Shaykh Safi al-Din of Ardabil, the ancestor of Shah Isma'il and the eponymous founder of the Safavid dynasty. The title of the poem appears to promise the revelation of the secrets of the two letters *ta* and *ha*, which are among the so-called *huruf muqatta'at* (unconnected letters) that open certain Qur'anic suras. It is important to note that the twentieth sura of the Qur'an, which begins with these two letters, held a special relevance for the alchemists of the Islamicate world, because it contains the narrative of Moses's encounter with Pharaoh and his court magicians. It is during this encounter that the staff of Moses is transformed into a serpent and the hand of Moses turned a brilliant white, which were both frequently used as alchemical imagery. The title thus works on multiple levels, referring to lettrist, alchemical, Sufi, and even astrological doctrines, all of which are further explored in a related prose text.

The popularity of the *Sırr-ı Ta-Ha* is apparent not only from its ubiquitous presence in Ottoman manuscripts but also from a lengthy Turkish commentary written to explain its hidden meanings. This commentary, excerpted and translated here, was among the most frequently copied alchemical texts in prose in the Ottoman world from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, but like the *Sırr-ı Ta-Ha* itself, it has never been edited, translated, or even been the subject of a serious study. The authorship of the prose text is attributed to Shaykh Eşrefoğlu ‘Abdullah Rumi, the eponymous creator of the Eşrefiyye subbranch of the Qadiri Sufi order. While many members of the Eşrefi-Qadiri order played an important role in the production of alchemical knowledge in the Ottoman Empire, the attribution of this commentary to ‘Abdullah Rumi is almost certainly spurious. The commentary is a unique “alchemical” text that brings together numerous fields of learning, including Sufism, lettrism, astrology, geography, and medicine. As is common in Islamicate alchemical discourse, these diverse branches of knowledge are deemed necessary for the study of the supreme science—that is, the science of alchemy.

In the third essay, Eva Orthmann investigates the role of the occult sciences in the sixteenth-century Mughal court through the study of Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari’s *The Five Jewels* (*al-Jawahir al-Khams*). Gwaliyari is considered to be one of the most important Sufi shaykhs of the Shattari order and a prime example of a scholar immersed in lettrism, including lettrist cosmological speculations, and astral-magical practices. His invocations of the planets and the sun (the latter translated here), for instance, were well known among the Mughal literati. Another influential Mughal occultist, Muhammad Fazil Samarqandi, also wrote on planetary and solar invocations, although using a different approach than that of Gwaliyari. He illustrates his alternative method of sun-invocation in his encyclopedia, *The Jewels of Humayuni Sciences* (*Jawahir al-‘ulum-i Humayuni*) (excerpted and translated here), in which he also elaborates on various occult traditions and practices. Finally, through the analysis of relevant passages of the famed chronicle *Akbarnama*, wherein its author Abu l-Fazl discusses Emperor Akbar’s nativity and the casting of his horoscope, Orthmann demonstrates the application of lettrist and astrological speculations in daily life at the Mughal court.

I. The Occult Sciences in Safavid Iran

MATTHEW MELVIN-KOUSHKI

Preceding then paralleling similar developments in Renaissance Europe, royal patronage of the occult sciences sharply increased in the post-Mongol Persianate world, particularly in tandem with the florescence of occultism among scholarly elites in the Islamic heartlands from the mid-fourteenth century onward. Such was the attraction these sciences held that Mamluk, Timurid and Aqqyunlu, rulers frequently employed professional occultists as strategists and ideologues in support of their imperial claims. With these fifteenth-century states as template, Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal dynasts continued this tradition of occult-scientific patronage as key ideological prop, and indeed expanded it in the run-up to the Islamic millennium (1000/1592 CE) as imperial messianism crescendoed.

This massive patronage program, sustained over centuries, is easily explained, post-Enlightenment scientific positivism notwithstanding. As many occultist manuals written for early modern Turko-Mongol Perso-Islamic ruling elites assert, the occult sciences, classified from the ninth century onward as a distinctive subset of the rational sciences, confer control over time and space, thereby allowing sovereigns and bureaucrats to control their political and material fate—a imperially compelling prospect indeed. These sciences thus fall into two categories: prognosticative or divinatory, concerned with time, and magical or operative, concerned with space, that is, the physical and psychical realms. The first includes astrology (*nūjum*, *ahkam-i nūjum*), geomancy (*raml*), and letter divination (*jafr*), often considered to be applied mathematical (*riyazi*) sciences in the early modern Persianate world; the second includes alchemy (*kimiya*) and letter magic (*simiya*),

especially talismans (*tilismat*), each both mathematical and natural (*tabi'i*). From the thirteenth century onward, moreover, the occult sciences as an epistemological unit were progressively sanctified through their association with the sacral power (*walaya*) of the Shi'i imams, and by extension Sufi saints, as well as the text of the Qur'an itself—such that *Islam* became synonymous with *magic* for a majority of Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal scholarly and ruling elites. The epistemological boundaries between these rational-cum-religious sciences were highly porous as a consequence, and they were routinely used in tandem. One must first know the future in order to change it, especially *militarily*; and one must be able to change the future to successfully claim *millennial sovereignty*.

SAFAVID IRAN: LETTRISM

This section takes as a representative test case the occult science of letters (*'ilm-i huruf*), or lettrism, as practiced and patronized in Safavid Iran. Widely considered a universal science (that is, having metaphysical, mathematical, and physical applications) by the sixteenth century, as well as the science of the saints (*'ilm-i awliya'*) *par excellence*, this coeval Arabic twin to Hebrew kabbalah encompassed everything from the simplest forms of letter magic and letter divination to the most rarefied forms of cosmological speculation. This epistemological breadth gave lettrism immense popularity and mainstream status, such that it became ubiquitous among early modern scholarly and ruling elites from Anatolia to India. The Safavids were no exception; their patronage of the occult sciences generally and lettrism specifically seems to have been somewhat less robust than that of their Ottoman and Mughal competitors to the west and east, both as frequently messianic in their imperial self-fashioning but presiding over empires much wealthier and far more populous and cosmopolitan; sources report a number of high-profile lettrists, geomancers, astrologers, and alchemists connected with the Safavid court. More importantly, Safavid Iran in general, and Shiraz in particular, served as occult-scientific capital of the Persian cosmopolis: the infamous brain drain of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, due to Qizilbash-induced instability and persecution of Nuqtavis, meant that perhaps as much as *half* of the professional occultists working at the neighboring Ottoman, Mughal, and lesser courts were in origin and/or training Shirazis.

Of these I have chosen as a representative example Mahmud Dihdar Shirazi (fl. 1576), penname 'Iyani (Eyewitness), the most prolific Persian author on lettrism of the sixteenth century; most notably, this aspiring Safavid courtier was teacher to the hugely influential Safavid Chief Jurisconsult (*shaykh al-islam*) Baha' al-Din al-'Amili (d. 1621)—a chief architect in turn of the new Safavid Shi'i imperial culture—in the occult sciences. The Dihdars were a prominent scholarly family during the sixteenth century, and seem to have adjusted smoothly to the Safavid takeover: Mahmud's father was the famed astronomer-philosopher Shams al-Din

Khafri (d. 1535), who enjoyed good relations with Shah Isma'il I (r. 1501–1524), and his son Muhammad Dihdar Shirazi (d. 1607), an émigré to India and protégé of the famed polymath-occultist Mir Fath Allah Shirazi (d. 1589), was the author of much admired mystico-philosophical works. Together with his mentorship of Shaykh Baha'i, Mahmud Dihdar's connection to the Safavid court is suggested by the fact that he was a student and associate of Shaykh Abu l-Qasim Muhammad (d. 1590), aka Amri Shirazi, who served as court poet under Shah Tahmasb I (r. 1524–1576) for thirty years. Our Shirazi occultist also dedicated at least three works to this shah's son and short-lived, controversial successor, Shah Isma'il II (r. 1576–1577), who is therein fashioned a millennial sovereign in strictly occult-scientific terms. In the preface to the first, entitled *Zubdat al-Asrar* (*Choicest Secrets*), he significantly provides a lettrist proof for the ontological equivalency of Shah Isma'il (I and II) and Imam 'Ali—a theme central to early Safavid imperial propaganda—and a prognostication of events up to the Islamic millennium. The second, *Sifat al-Nufus fi Tawhid al-Quddus* (*Attributes of the Soul: On the Oneness of the All-holy*), opens with praise of Muhammad, 'Ali, and Shah Isma'il II in quick succession. The third, *Hall al-Rumuz* (*Explicating Allusions*), a commentary on a thirteenth-century lettrist classic written for a distinguished visiting colleague from Mosul, somewhat reworks the lettrist proof and prognostication offered in the *Zubdat al-Asrar*—and goes beyond it to announce the imminent manifestation of the Mahdi at the turn of the millennium.

Mahmud Dihdar's oeuvre as a whole is likewise overtly Imami Shi'i in flavor, a design feature calculated to attract the patronage of Safavid elites. He emphasizes lettrism's status as the science of the imams *par excellence* and hence the primary means of harnessing their sacral power; this association, of course, goes back to the origins of Shi'ism itself, but it is here recast in strictly *scientific* terms. Most remarkably, Mahmud asserts that he is responsible for working out the first comprehensive letter-magical operation based on the names of the Fourteen Infallibles (*chahardah ma'sum*)—who are thus posited as *cosmological principles* available to (occult-) scientific experimentation. (I translate a portion of this operation below.) In short, our Shirazi lettrist, like his better-known scholarly associates, played a significant role in the construction of a new Safavid Shi'i imperial culture during the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Mahmud Dihdar authored at least nineteen works, all in the field of applied lettrism and its ancillary disciplines, and almost exclusively in Persian. Chief among these is the *Mafatih al-Maghaliq* (*Keys to All Locks*), a sizable manual of letter magic and letter divination not dissimilar to the *Shams al-Ma'arif al-Kubra* (*The Great Sun of Knowledge*), the ubiquitous grimoire associated with the North African sufi-mage Ahmad al-Buni (d. c. 1225–1233), whom it regularly cites. Mahmud's own grimoire appears to have been prized since the sixteenth century and is still readily procurable from bazaars in Iran, with scans circulating freely online.² Other popular works include *Zubdat al-Ahvah* (*Choicest Talismans*), on letter magic and letter divination, which contains his signature letter-magical invocation of the Fourteen

Infalibles; and the abovementioned *Zubdat al-Asrar*, on astral letter magic, particularly planetary invocations.

Due to the reflexive scholarly elision of occultism from early modern Islami-cate intellectual, political, and cultural history, however, this influential Shirazi occultist has yet to be studied, nor have any of his writings been published in modern editions. To show the authorial range and didactic and eulogizing style of a typical sixteenth-century Persian court occultist, I therefore translate short excerpts from the three works just listed on the basis of surviving manuscript and lithograph copies.

KEYS TO ALL LOCKS

Mafatih al-Maghaliq is Mahmud Dihdar's most seminal work on various aspects of applied lettrism, as suggested by a cursory survey of surviving manuscripts of the work in Iran alone—some twenty-eight, as well as four extracts. Its popularity continues unabated today, moreover: a Google search on the title (February 2018) returned some 30,000 hits in Arabic and Persian, with regular citation on Internet discussion boards dedicated to lettrism, and a number of websites in Iran sell pdfs of a nineteenth-century manuscript facsimile.³ The author informs us in the preface that the work was completed in 976 (1569 CE). He outlines its scope as follows.

Translation

The purpose behind the composition of this book is as follows: This worthless wretch, Ibn Muhammad Mahmud Dihdar, penname 'Iyani, was in the habit of meeting with a group of friends to discuss [various topics], and at each meeting I would speak about various principles of the science of *taksir*,⁴ the rules governing the [construction of a] comprehensive prognosticon (*jafr-i jamī*'), a concealed solar [prognosticon] (*khabīya-yi shamsi*) and a hidden lunar [prognosticon] (*khaftīya-yi qamari*), the secrets of magic squares (*a'dad-i vafq*), the nature of the letter (*harf*) and the dot (*nuqta*), and the active properties (*khavass*) of each of the above. As some participants held erroneous views on various of these topics, I thought it necessary to draft a text (*nuskha*) and string together a few lines to provide beginner students of this noble science with an adequate exemplar (*unmuzajī kafi*).

[*Mafatih al-Maghaliq*, n.p., n.d., 1–2]

HOW TO CONSTRUCT A COMPREHENSIVE PROGNOSTICON

Those who wish to write such a text must refrain from all forbidden acts and be in a state of ritual purity; in such a state and in total purity one may then purpose to

write, and write only under auspicious aspects and during auspicious hours. At base this prognosticon (*jafr*) has 28 sections, with each section having twenty-eight pages, and each page having twenty-eight lines, and each line having twenty-eight cells, and in each cell four letters are written (these corresponding to the four elements).⁵ The procedure for writing them may be exemplified as follows. In each cell of the first line of the first page of the first section write the following:

ا ا ا ا ا ا ا ا ا ا ا ا

Continue with the fifth cell in similar fashion, writing an *H* after three *As*, and in the sixth cell a *W* after three *As*, until you arrive at the twenty-eighth cell at the end of the first line of the first page, wherein you write a *Gh* after three *As*. In the second line of the first page of the first section proceed as follows:

ا ب ا ا ب ج ا ب ب ا ب ا

Continue in similar fashion until in the twenty-eighth cell at the end of the second line of the first page you write *AABGh*. And in the third line of the first page of the first section proceed as follows:

ا ج ا ا ج ج ا ج ب ا ج ا

Continue in similar fashion to the end of the page. On the second page of the first section proceed as follows:

ا ب ا ا ب ا ج ا ب ا ب ا ب ا ا

On the second line of the second page proceed as follows:

ا ب ب د ا ب ب ج ا ب ب ب ا ب ب ا

It will be clear to the percipient how to proceed with the rest of the writing.

The virtue (*khassiyat*) of this procedure is that all the divine names in every language (*lughat*), however expressed (*'ibarat*), are thus contained in their entirety in this text by means of complete *taksir*; and universal benefits are therein comprised. Any capable and fortunate person (*sahib-i dawlati*) who completes the writing [of a book of *jafr*], from beginning to end, while observing the requisite conditions as mentioned above, will doubtlessly achieve his worldly or spiritual aim and find himself the subject of material and spiritual conquests (*futuh*).

Know that this procedure is generally and specifically dependent on the transit of the Moon, though it is also more broadly tied to all seven planets, and the Sun in particular. But because [a book of *jafr* is constituted of] twenty-eight sections of

twenty-eightpages each, each page having twenty-eightlines and each line having twenty-eightcells, it corresponds most closely to the Moon and its mansions. By this principle, then, each section generally corresponds to a celestial house, its pages to the houses' degrees (*darajat*), its lines to the minutes (*daqayiq*) of those degrees, and its letters to their seconds (*savani*). Likewise, in general terms the first page of the first section is linked to Sharatayn (β γ Arietis), the first degree of Aries, which begins the series, and the last page of its first section is linked to the mansion of Rasha (Bāt al-Hut, β Andromedae), the last degree of Pisces. Thus the first twelve sections of the text are linked with the twelve stages of the lunar transit of its mansions, totaling some 336 days, equivalent to eleven months and a few days.

[*Mafatih al-Maghaliq*, 13–16]

HOW TO PERFORM A PLANETARY INVOCATION BASED ON THE FATIHA

Know that the practitioners of this noble science assign the seven verses of the Fatiha to the seven planets respectively, beginning with Saturn and ending with the Moon according to the order of verses. Some reverse this order, assigning the first verse to the Moon and the last to Saturn. Some also assign them to the days of the week, beginning from Sunday, which is associated with the Sun, to Monday, associated with the Moon, to Tuesday, associated with Mars, to Wednesday, associated with Mercury, to Thursday, associated with Jupiter, to Friday, associated with Venus, to Saturday, associated with Saturn, thereby drawing a correspondence between the verses of the Fatiha and the planet governing the assigned days of each and in the same order as enumerated. Others assign them according to the order of the planets, beginning from the sphere of the Sun, to which they assign the first verse of the sura; the last verse they assign to Mars. This [system of] correspondence is preferable to the first in that the names of angels and [jinn] helpers (*a'van*) require the mention of that planet with which they are associated in such an invocation, as Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq established in his assignment of letters to verses of the Fatiha, which scheme was carried over by the author of the *Ghayat al-Hakim* and systematized by Shaykh Abu l-Abbas Buni—that is, proceeding in *abjad* order beginning with the Sun and ending with Mars:

Sun	A B J D	Saturn	F S Q R
Venus	H W Z H	Jupiter	Sh T Th Kh
Mercury	T Y K L	Mars	Dh D Z Gh
Moon	M N S '		

[*Mafatih al-Maghaliq*, 162–63]

VENUS TALISMAN

If someone is cold toward you and you wish to make them friendly, write [the talismanic symbols below] on a glass cup with musk and saffron on Friday at the beginning of the day and make them drink therefrom; but you must make them drink it with honey and willowsap (? *'araq-i bid*) while the preacher is on the pulpit on Friday.

[This operation] is also useful for inducing obedience in your object of desire (*ma'shuqi*): using your own semen (*ab-i mina*), write the Venus talisman on white sugar and make your beloved eat it, and things will become easy (*muyassar*).

And if you inscribe the Venus talisman on deer leather (*varaḡ-i ahu*) or birdskin paper (*kaghaz-i tayr*) with musk, saffron, and willowsap on Friday while the preacher is delivering his sermon and then roll it up and keep it with you, it is useful in attracting (*dusti*) beardless boys (*amradan*) and women.

کے خلاف طعن و تہمتیں لگائیں۔ ہرگز معصوم لوگوں کو راج بہ ہو رہا ہے۔ یہ مسدود و مہماندہ معاشرہ کے خلاف طعن و تہمتیں لگائیں۔

[*Mafatih al-Maghaliq*, 323–24, 325.]

CHOICEST SECRETS

Zubdat al-Asrar is Mahmud Dihdar's most focused work on astral letter magic, including planetary invocations. There appear to be two versions of this treatise. The first, whose title in full is *Zubdat al-Asrar va Khulasat al-Azkar*, reflects its divisions into *zubdat al-asrar* (theoretical discussion in verse) and *khulasat al-azkar* (prose, including example Arabic invocations) sections, and contains a dedicatory preface for Shah Isma'il II, newly enthroned in 1576 upon the death of Tahmasb; it is largely devoted to a lettrist analysis of his name and a prediction of events up to the year 1592. (As Isma'il II's reign lasted little more than a year, this version of the treatise must have been written shortly after his accession.) Reflecting the evolution of Safavid imperial identity during the long reign of the new shah's father, it is highly significant that Mahmud Dihdar here seeks to demonstrate the ontological equivalency of Isma'il and 'Ali on lettrist bases (the Qizilbash earlier having worshipped the first Safavid shah as the reincarnation of 'Ali); similarly important is his identification of Isma'il with the divine name All-hearing, this for purposes of letter-magical working. The second version, titled *Kanz al-Rumuz*, lacks this dedicatory preface but is otherwise identical to the first. The work contains a variety of tables for consultation by the lettrist practitioner, such as the generation of the letters (*hurufat*) from celestial conjunctions (*istikakat-i falaki*) and the transit of planets, the letters in their planetary houses, the letters as assigned to the four elements (*arkan*), and

so forth. Two manuscript copies survive in Iran,⁶ together with one partial copy entitled only *Khulasat al-Azkar*.⁷

Translation

A LETTRIST ANALYSIS OF THE NAME OF SHAH ISMA'IL II UPON HIS ACCESSION

In praise of the greatest khaqan, Abu al-Muzaffar Sultan Shah Isma'il Bahadur Khan:

God be praised—through the Beneficent's gift
the light of truth has emerged from eclipse,
from its sign of exaltation the Sun of kingship
has cast forth its rays upon the four quarters!
A king has ascended the throne
from which a sovereign may behold [his realm]:
a pearl among the glorious saints (*awliya*),
a shah Jamshid-like in his magnificence—Shah Isma'il.
The light of his essence shines forth from on high:
contained within his name is the name of 'Ali ('LY).
If you require an answer to this riddle,
' with *L* and *Y* is Isma'il.

(Explanation of the reference: 'YN = 130, LAM = 71, YA = 11, totaling 212 = ASMA'YL (Isma'il) = Master of the Kingdom (*malik almulk*, MALKALMLK))

For the percipient, the letter of this name
denotes the [divine] name the All-hearing (*al-sami'*, ALSMY' = 212).
The glory and sovereignty of this shah
centers on the *D* (4) of divine outpouring;
the letter *H* (8) too, by way of pages [of *jafr*],
establishes his rule.
These two letters together with *J* (3)
are derived by establishing the number of their ordering.
All is activated by *A* (1),
the circuit of motion and the structuring of rest.
This is according to the cycling of the moon
(the percipient will understand this allusion):
when the lunar cycle reaches its fullness
the new moon shines forth from the royal countenance;
when the full moon is veiled
the sun bathes the earth in light.

For Shah Tahmasb has passed on from worldly rule
 to the palace of eternity.
 Give thanks that the choicest member of his line—
 nay, the very light of certainty radiating from his eyes—
 has mounted the royal throne
 like the sun replacing the moon:
 may his rule be perpetuated
 and his every undertaking in the world come to pass as he will.
 As long as the world persists he shall be king
 and his enemy utterly despoiled.

[MS Majlis 12653/3 ff. 71b–72a]

CHOICEST TALISMANS

Zubdat al-Alvah is a prose work treating of magical operations based on the *muqatta'at*⁸ and other subtle points (*nukat-i ghariba*) on the science of *jafr* and numbers, including procedures by which to derive the names of angels and jinn for the purpose of constructing incantations (sg. *'azimat*). Five manuscript copies survive in Iran, and there exist at least two lithograph printings.⁹

Translation

TWO ARABIC ANGEL-JINN INCANTATIONS

To be repeated seventy-one (= *ALM*) times:

In the name of God, All-merciful, Ever-merciful. I hereby bind (*ta'zim*) you, O pure spirits subjected and obedient to this noble square (*lawh*)—O 'Aba'il,¹⁰ O Saha'il, O 'Ada'il, O 'A'il, O Qamba'il, O Rija'il, by the right of your leader and ruler Khalta'il—, to answer my summons (*da'wa*) and command these [jinn] helpers (*a'wan*)—'Ajayush, Sazayush, 'Ahayush, Satayush—to fulfill my need by virtue of the Greatest Name *ALM* and by the right of your Creator and Maker and Existentiator. God bless you! Haste, haste, now, now, hurry, hurry!

[*Zubdat al-Alvah*, 9]

To be repeated ninety-nine times over fourteen days:

In the name of God, All-merciful, Ever-merciful. I hereby bind and invoke you, O spirits charged with the A written on the Preserved Tablet and aware of the mystery it enshrines: give ear to my words and answer my summons and obey my command by virtue of the A as inscribed in its entirety in the Torah and the Gospels and the Psalms and the Qur'an (*al-furqan*) and all the scriptures (*kutub, asfar*) revealed to all the prophets of God (upon whom be peace) and

by virtue of these mighty names that are the isolated letters (*al-muqatta'at*): ALR KHY'S TS HM Q N. God bless you and give you glad tidings of paradise!¹¹

[*Zubdat al-Alvah*, 10–11]

A LETTRIST INVOCATION OF THE FOURTEEN INFALLIBLES

Dear friend, know that when one purposes to perform an invocation based on the luminous letters (*da'vat-i nurani*) at the beginning of the month, as described above, one must first satisfy several conditions and only then begin.¹² First, before reciting incantations, on each day of these fourteen days one should draw a square (*lawh*) named for one of these fourteen precious souls and seek help from its revelatory spirit, for they are the keepers of the treasure of divine knowledge and the most percipient knowers of the secrets of the unseen realm, so that its great spirit may elevate your state and protect you from danger.

Then, on the first day, having sought by way of blessing (*tayammun u tabarruk*) the mediation (*tavassul*) of the purified spirit and fragrant form of the holy Seal of the prophets and master of the messengers, Muhammad, the Messenger of God, arrange a square named for this holy eminence in accordance with the Moon (*bi vafq-i qamar*) and offer prayers to the revelatory spirit of that holy eminence and his noble House according to the numbers of the *vafq* of that square, repeating this litany of prayers the same number of times throughout the fourteen-day period.

On the second day, make a square according to the name of the holy eminence 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the triumphant Lion of God, Commander of the Faithful, Leader of the God-fearing and the Faith. On the third day, arrange one according to the name of the exalted eminence and Best of Women Fatima al-Zahra' (God keep her). (Know that the name of her exalted eminence, the Best of Women, is so written [immediately after 'Ali] because the science (*'ilmi*) that the holy eminence and Commander of the Faithful (God keep him) instituted, [a science] that allows one to predict future events until the end of time, is called the Codex (*mushaf*) of Fatima—neglect not this point, and understand!) The same procedure should be followed for the next eleven days, every day constructing a square according to the name of one of the imams until arriving at the holy eminence and Lord of Command (*sahib al-amr*), the Mahdi.

This lowly wretch has expended such extraordinary effort in this matter and so derived and constructed the abovementioned squares [according to the names of the Fourteen Infallibles] as to surpass all previous efforts, this being an instance of spiritual inspiration (*mulhamat-i ghaybi*); for observing the appropriate times for such operations tells us that they cannot be properly carried out in the absence of a connection with the eternal [divine] emanation (*fayz-i azali*). This wretch therefore believes that it is quite possible that no other authority in this field has done something similar, and if they have it was certainly not with the same degree of finesse.

[*Zubdat al-Alvah*, 17–18]

DIVINE-NAMES AND ANGEL MAGIC BASED ON
JAFR AND THE MUQATTA'AT

The following mighty [divine] names are possessed of numerous active properties and may be deployed to satisfy any need by invoking them or performing *taksir* on them and carrying [the resulting talisman] on one's person—a most exceedingly useful [operation]. First, in order to ward off hunger, the names Everlasting (*Samad*) and Nourisher (*Muqit*) are to be invoked, and that with as much force as possible; while it is generally possible to invoke them without using the established principles of gematrical calculation, the ideal method is to perform *taksir* [on them] in writing and arrange the result in a magic square. To find guidance (*hidayat*) and instruction (*rushd*), invoke the names Guide (*Hadi*) and Right-minded (*Rashid*) according to the method previously discussed—they are extremely beneficial [to this end], though only as long as the specified conditions have been met. To ward off poverty, the names All-sufficient (*Ghani*) and Enricher (*Mughni*) are extremely useful. To ameliorate bodily weakness and torpor, the names Strong (*Qawi*) and Steadfast (*Matin*) are of great benefit when activated according to the method previously discussed. To ward off humiliation and abasement, activate the names All-mighty ('*Aziz*) and All-glorious ('*Azim*) according to the established method. To ward off sorrow and sadness, the names Ever-gentle (*Latif*) and All-embracing (*Wasi'*) are of great benefit. To reverse helplessness, activate the names All-powerful (*Qadir*) and Omnipotent (*Qahir*). To counteract ignorance, activate the names All-knowing ('*Alim*) and Reckoner (*Muhsi*). To ward off pains and diseases, activating the names Healer (*Shafi*) and Reliever (*Mu'afi*) is of great benefit, and is a tried and true (*mujarrab*) [technique]. To ward off mental constriction and straitness of thought, activate the names Expander (*Basit*) and All-generous (*Jawad*). To encourage love and affection, activate the names Beloved (*Habib*) and All-loving (*Wadud*). To triumph over enemies, activate the name Mighty of Assault (*Shadid al-Batsh*). To gain patience and steadfastness in any undertaking, activate the names Ever-constant (*Da'im*) and All-patient (*Sabur*).

As for activation ('*amal*'), it refers to the process whereby one performs *taksir* on the above names, by whatever method, then writes a magic square with the result and orders its number, such that in persistent invocation [of said names] one does not go over or under that number. One must also burn [appropriate types of] incense and restrict one's operation to appropriate hours, the best being a [favorable] aspect of Jupiter or Venus (*nazar-i sa'dayn*), but any other appropriate hours on any good day, [these involving] an auspicious ascendant (*tali'-i sa'd*) or the exaltation of Sun or Moon (*khushhali-yi nayyirayn*),¹³ will work as well; this is required to manifest the desired effect. As the percipient practitioner will generally be familiar with the most suitable hour, ascendant and aspect [for undertaking a given operation, there is no need] to go into detail here, as this would distract us from our purpose and is beyond the scope of the present summary work (*mukhtasar*); and all other explanations have already been provided in some detail above.

As promised, then, I will now turn to a discussion of the 14×14 square (*lawh*), this composed of the isolated letters (*muqatta'at*) and the divine names that are composed of those letters together with their *bayyinat*),¹⁴ as was explained above. And to these divine names should be added the letter B, the key of *bismi Llahi l-Rahmani l-Rahim* (In the name of God, All-merciful, Ever-merciful), for the number of letters in [this phrase], minus repetitions, is ten [(that is, BSMALHRHNY)], with B being the only one not part of the set of luminous letters (*huruf-i nurani*, that is, the *muqatta'at*). This letter is therefore deliberately included among them here in order to profit from the *bismi Llahi l-Rahmani l-Rahim*, the opening of God's Speech. The square is as follows:

الله	لطيف	ملك	صفى	رحيم	كريم	هادى	يوه	عالى	طيب	سميع	حاكم	قيوم	نافع
لطيف	ملك	صفى	رحيم	كريم	هادى	نافع	الله	يوه	عالى	طيب	سميع	حاكم	قيوم
ملك	صفى	رحيم	كريم	هادى	نافع	قيوم	لطيف	الله	يوه	عالى	طيب	سميع	حاكم
صفى	رحيم	كريم	يوه	نافع	قيوم	حاكم	ملك	لطيف	الله	هادى	عالى	طيب	سميع
رحيم	كريم	هادى	نافع	قيوم	حاكم	سميع	صفى	ملك	لطيف	الله	يوه	عالى	طيب
كريم	هادى	نافع	قيوم	حاكم	سميع	طيب	رحيم	صفى	ملك	لطيف	الله	يوه	عالى
هادى	نافع	قيوم	حاكم	سميع	طيب	عالى	كريم	رحيم	صفى	ملك	لطيف	الله	يوه
نافع	قيوم	حاكم	سميع	طيب	عالى	يوه	هادى	كريم	رحيم	صفى	ملك	لطيف	الله
يوه	الله	لطيف	ملك	صفى	رحيم	عالى	طيب	سميع	حاكم	قيوم	نافع	هادى	
عالى	يوه	الله	لطيف	ملك	صفى	رحيم	طيب	سميع	حاكم	قيوم	نافع	هادى	كريم
طيب	عالى	يوه	الله	لطيف	ملك	صفى	رحيم	سميع	حاكم	قيوم	نافع	هادى	كريم
سميع	طيب	عالى	هادى	الله	لطيف	ملك	هادى	كريم	رحيم	صفى	ملك	لطيف	الله
حاكم	سميع	طيب	عالى	يوه	الله	لطيف	ملك	هادى	كريم	رحيم	صفى	ملك	لطيف
قيوم	حاكم	سميع	طيب	عالى	يوه	الله	نافع	هادى	كريم	رحيم	صفى	ملك	لطيف

Know that the key to these fourteen names is the fourteen luminous letters, which are as follows: *ALMSRKHY'TSHQN*. The *bayyinat* of these letters, minus the repetition of their *zukur*,¹⁵ are *FRW* (286), and the number of the letters of the *bayyinat* J (3). Together with the B of *bismi Llah*, then, these fourteen names are composed of these letters.

It is similarly evident that the second page completed on the second day [of the operation] should feature the *taksir* of *L* in fourteen lines, [the first three being as follows]:

ل ل ل	ا ق ل ل ل	ا ح ل ل ل	ا س ل ل ل	ا ط ل ل ل	ا ع ل ل ل	ا ی ل ل ل	ا ه ل ل ل	ا ك ل ل ل	ا ر ل ل ل	ا ص ل ل ل	ا م ل ل ل	ا ل ل ل ل	ا ل ل ل ل
ل ل ل ل	ل ل ل ل ق	ل ل ل ل ح	ل ل ل ل س	ل ل ل ل ط	ل ل ل ل ع	ل ل ل ل ی	ل ل ل ل ه	ل ل ل ل ك	ل ل ل ل ر	ل ل ل ل ص	ل ل ل ل م	ل ل ل ل ل	ل ل ل ل ا
ل ل ل ل م	ل ل ل ل ق	ل ل ل ل ح	ل ل ل ل س	ل ل ل ل ط	ل ل ل ل ع	ل ل ل ل ی	ل ل ل ل ه	ل ل ل ل ك	ل ل ل ل ر	ل ل ل ل ص	ل ل ل ل م	ل ل ل ل ل	ل ل ل ل ا

As for the remaining [twelve] letters, they are to be dealt with in the manner described on each [subsequent] day until all fourteen days are completed, such that by the time of the full Moon 196 pages have been produced. They may then serve as the basis for invocation according to the procedure (*dastur*) [whose components are] as follows:

1. Fasting, seclusion, *zīkr*, incense (*bukhur*) and a vegetarian diet (*tark-i akl-i hayavani*).
2. Observance of propitious times for the writing, such as the hour of Jupiter, Venus, the Moon or the Sun.
3. The derivation of an incantation ('*azimat*') from the first of the [fourteen] pages written [each day].
4. Persistent [invocation] of those divine names that emerge from the pages written each day as noted [by the practitioner]. For example, once fourteen pages have been written on the first day, several divine names will be evident therein; analyzing those names by way of gematria ('*adad-i jummal*'), recite those names the same day according to the number of their sum, and incorporate them when one performs an incantation.
5. Only break fast with licit food, and maintain seclusion, avoiding contact with people unless compelled by necessity.
6. Having written [the above] during the [first] fourteen days of the month of Rajab, on each of the [first] fourteen days of the [subsequent] month of Sha'ban one is to perform the *taksir* operation of *sadr u mu'akhkhar*⁶ on the luminous letters to whatever extent is feasible, and the same again during the [first] fourteen days of Ramadan. This operation proceeds as follows:

ن	ق	ح	س	ط	ع	ی	ه	ك	ر	ص	م	ل	ا
ه	ی	ك	ع	ر	ط	ص	س	م	ح	ل	ق	ا	ن
س	ص	م	ط	ح	ر	ل	ع	ق	ك	ا	ی	ن	ه

ع	ل	ق	ر	ك	ح	ا	ط	ی	م	ن	ص	ه	س
ط	ا	ی	ح	م	ك	ن	ر	ص	ق	ه	ل	س	ع
ر	ن	ص	ك	ق	م	ه	ح	ل	ی	س	ا	ع	ط
ح	ه	ل	م	ی	ق	س	ك	ا	ص	ع	ن	ط	ر
ك	س	ا	ق	ص	ی	ع	م	ن	ل	ط	ه	ر	ح
م	ع	ن	ی	ل	ص	ط	ق	ه	ا	ر	س	ح	ك
ق	ط	ه	ص	ا	ل	ر	ی	س	ن	ح	ع	ك	م
ی	ر	س	ل	ن	ا	ح	ص	ع	ه	ك	ط	م	ق
ص	ح	ع	ا	ه	ن	ك	ل	ط	س	م	ر	ق	ی
ل	ك	ط	ن	س	ه	م	ا	ر	ع	ق	ح	ی	ص
ا	م	ر	ه	ع	س	ق	ن	ح	ط	ی	ك	ص	ل

After this page is completed, take its initial letters (*huruf-i sadr*) and make a list (*zimam*), then perform *taksir* according to the established method until the first line is again produced; then do the same for the second page and each page following until you arrive at a page whose initial letters match the list of the first page—a [form of] *taksir* that can be done repeatedly, whether in normal (*man-sub*) or reverse (*maqlub*) order.¹⁷ The point being, during the fourteen-day waxing phase of each of the two months following the first this *taksir* [operation] must be performed, with up to fourteen pages of this *taksir* produced per day.

7. Ten days before the beginning of Rajab commence eating a vegetarian diet, fasting and seclusion, such that by the time that the full three months [required for this operation] have passed ninety-nine days will have elapsed [in observance of these conditions]. This fortunate period (*dawlat*) is favorable because during these three months while the Moon is waxing [it does not enter] the mansion of Tariqa¹⁸ and the sign of Scorpio, [a configuration] it is necessary to avoid.

As long as these conditions are fulfilled, then, [the practitioner] will be able to carry out any operation he wishes with the greatest of ease and successfully subject (*taskhir*) the spirits (*ruhaniyyat*) of the letters to his will.

An example of the method for deriving an incantation (*‘azimat*) is as follows: On the first day [of the above operation] when one writes [all the permutations of]

the letter A on fourteen pages and the names God (*Allah*), Most Beneficient (*Akram*), Most Merciful (*Arham*) and Most High (*A'la*) manifest therein, one first performs *bast* on the A according to the procedure here described, derives [the names of its associated] angels (*mala'ika*), then invokes them according to the following method. Level one of A—the letter alone—, then level two—*ALF* (*alif*)—, then level three—*ALFLAMFA* (*alif-lam-fa*)—, which together produce twelve [letters of number names]: *AHD*, *ThLATHYN*, *ThMANYN*, *ThLATHYN*, *AHD wa ARBYN*, *ThMANYN*, *AHD* (that is, 1, 30, 80, 30, 41, 80, 1 = 263). Adding them together reveals thirty-nine letters in total. One then multiplies these thirty-nine letters with the twelve letters of the third level [of A], producing the sum that is to be used [in constructing the names of angels]. For example, when we multiply 39 by 12 the product is 468, which when converted to letters (*istintaq*) is *TSH*; thus the angel [of A] is Tisha'il, given that [the suffix] *-il* is added [to designate angels] after the fact. However, some hold it necessary to multiply the 39 letters by the 29 letters, converting the result to letters and adding *-il*, in this following the equally correct method laid out in the *Alvah-i Javahir*. All such methods are reasonable and reliable. Still others hold that the number of *-il* (that is, forty-one) should be subtracted from the product before deriving the letters of its governing angel's name, and then the *-il* added to it. All such methods have been used by the leading practitioners [of this science] (*ustadan*). Others hold that the angel of the letter A is rather Jibra'il (Gabriel), this according to the method described separately by the author of the *Navadir al-Asrar*.

In short, there are many different ways of performing this operation, and all of them equally legitimate. In this summary work, however, the first method of performing *bast* on the letter A is adopted, with the same being applied to the letters treated on each of the remaining [thirteen] days. The resulting incantation should be recited as follows:

In the name of God, All-merciful, Ever-merciful: Answer [my summons], O Tisha'il, [you and] your servants, hearing and obeying such that you fulfill my needs x and y by virtue of *ALR KHYS TS HM Q N*, and by virtue of [the divine names] God (*Allah*), Most Beneficient (*al-Akram*), Most Merciful (*al-Arham*), Most Perfect (*al-Akmal*) and Most High (*al-A'la*). The blessing of God be to you and on you!

This incantation is to be repeated ninety-nine times on each day of the operation, swearing (*qasam*) by the isolated Qur'anic letters, the [divine] name[s] that emerge from the pages [written each day] and the name of the angel [governing the relevant letter for the day in question] from among the remaining letters as derived in a square according to the method here described for A.

Now certain of the leading practitioners [of this science] hold that the [angelic] name so derived may be uttered in different forms. The initial form of Tisha'il may be altered to Hista'il, reversing its letter order. The letter representing the hundreds, [that is, *T* = 400], may also be removed, producing Saha'il; then the letter

representing the tens, [that is, $S = 60$], leaving only that representing the units, [that is, $H = 8$], producing Ha'il. If one wishes, moreover, this [last] may be expanded by one or two letters, producing Ajda'il or the like, with the proviso that the construction must be numerically equivalent to the remaining unit in question. For example, in the present operation the single [remaining] letter representing units is H , whose value is 8; it may therefore be substituted with Ajda'il ($AJD = 8$), which itself may be substituted with Haja'il, or Bawa'il, or Aza'il ($HJ, BW, AZ = 8$). In short, one must select only one of these names (*kalimat*) and use it consistently. If one elects to do so, the incantation is to be recited as follows:

In the name of God, All-merciful, Ever-merciful, I adjure ('*azm*) you, O angels of God, guarantors (*al-muwakkalin*) of the letter A as inscribed in the heavenly scriptures: Answer me, O Tisha'il (or Hista'il, or Saha'il, or Ha'il—and Ha'il may further be substituted with Ajda'il, or any other name numerically equivalent), you and your [jinn] helpers, hearing and obeying such that you fulfill my needs x and y by virtue of $ALR\ KHY'S\ TS\ HM\ Q\ N$, and by virtue of the mighty names God (*Allah*), Most Beneficent (*al-Akram*), Most Merciful (*al-Arham*), Most Perfect (*al-Akmal*), and Most High (*al-A'la*). The blessing of God be to you and on you!

[*Zubdat al-Alvah*, 26–29]

NOTES

1. Otto Neugebauer, "The Study of Wretched Subjects," *Isis* 42, no. 2 (1951): 111.
2. The author also prepared a summary version of this work, *Javami' al-Fava'id*, for his son during the latter's sojourn in Bijapur; the preface contains a lettrist analysis of the name 'Ali 'Adil Shah (r. 1558–1579), his son's patron.
3. My thanks to Alireza Doostdar for sharing his scanned bazaar copy of this text, which appears to be a facsimile of an incomplete manuscript copy made in 1859 (455 pp.); this is the version cited here.
4. In *taksir*, the most basic procedure in lettrism, the practitioner "unjoins the letters of one of the divine names and intersperses them with the letters of the word(s) designating his goal in a single line, then, performing an operation known to initiates, rearranges the order of the letters on two lines. This is repeated until the first line is in order, and from it is taken the names of the angels and the invocations used to address them. The practitioner then continues these invocations until the goal is achieved" (Hajji Khalifa, *Kashf al-Zunun 'an Asami l-Kutub wa-l-Funun*, 2 vols. [Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.], 2/1475).
5. A completed comprehensive prognosticon thus has 784 pages, with 784 cells and 3,136 letters per page, resulting in 87,808 cells and 2,458,624 letters in total.
6. MS Majlis 12653/3 ff. 70b-139a, MS Majlis 7373, 50 ff.
7. MS Milli 2706f/16 pp. 120–64.
8. That is, the disconnected letters that open certain Qur'anic suras, held by occultists to be reflective of the primordial language of creation and therefore comprising knowledge of past, present, and future to the end of time. This occult knowledge was usually

identified as a patrimony peculiar to the House of the Prophet by Shi'i and Sunni exegetes alike, and the basis for the prognosticon (*jafr*, literally calfskin) associated with 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the similarly prognosticatory Codex (*mushaf*) of Fatima.

9. MS Mar'ashi 12710/10 ff. 47–63, MS Mar'ashi 11962/4 ff. 38–54, MS Mar'ashi 5584/3 ff. 16b–60a, MS Mar'ashi 7606/1 ff. 7b–23a, MS Majlis 12653/6 ff. 181b–206a; Bombay: Malik al-Kuttab, 1301/1883 and 1306/1889. The only copies of this work available to me at the time of writing were MS Majlis 12653/6 and the two Bombay lithographs; given that the latter are generally more reliable, references below are to the 1301/1883 printing.
10. Note that in such incantations the suffix *-il* is added to designate angels and the suffix *-ush* or *-yush* to designate jinn.
11. Compare with Q 41:30.
12. That is, the 14 letters of the *muqatta'at*. The 14 remaining letters of the Arabic alphabet are termed “dark” (*zulmani*).
13. Literally, “the felicity of the two luminaries.” The Sun has its exaltation in Leo, the Moon in Cancer.
14. When performing *taksir*, which involves the separation of the letters of a name or word and the writing out of the letter names in full, then the elimination of repeated letters (for example, Ahmad → AHMD → ALFHAMYMDAL → ALFHMYDL), the term *zubur* refers to the first letters in the full letter names (for example, the A in ALF) and *bayyināt* to the remaining letters (for example, LF in ALF).
15. See note 14.
16. That is, the reordering of letters in a line by alternately taking letters from the beginning and end of that line, as with, for example, ALFMYBNW → AWLNFMBY.
17. That is, reading a line of letters from right to left or left to right.
18. Also known to astrologers as *Tariqa combust* (*muhtariq*), this is an unfavorable lunar mansion between the nineteenth degree of Libra, the point marking the fall (*hubut*) of the Sun, and the third degree of Scorpio, the point marking the fall of the Moon (Dihkhuda, *Lughatnama*, s.v.).

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II. A Commentary on *The Secret of Ta-Ha* by the Pseudo-Eşrefoğlu Rumi

TUNA ARTUN

The Turkish commentary on the alchemical poem commonly known as *Sırr-ı Ta-Ha* (*The Secret of Ta-Ha*), excerpts from which are translated into English for the first time in the present volume, is both a unique and a uniquely important text. The commentary in question is among the earliest prose texts about alchemy in the Turkish vernacular. Learned alchemists, both Turkophone Ottomans and those who had recently arrived at Anatolia, Balkans, and the capital city of Istanbul from various corners of the Islamicate world authored numerous prose works in Arabic, and to a lesser extent in Persian, over the course of the sixteenth century.¹ The vernacularization of alchemical knowledge within the central lands of the Ottoman Empire, however, had its beginnings in a number of late sixteenth-century pseudo-epigraphical poems that were frequently copied together and that can therefore be considered a cycle of Turkish alchemical poems.² Considering the high reputation enjoyed by these versified technical treatises among early modern Ottoman alchemists, it is perhaps no coincidence that the first extensive Turkish prose work on alchemy treats one of them. As will be observed in greater detail below, the commentary is distinguished not only by its relatively early period of composition but also by the extensive utilization of other branches of knowledge to explicate the poem.

THE SECRET OF TA-HA

The poem that is the subject of the commentary was most likely composed in the second half of the sixteenth century, around the same time a substantial number of similar alchemical poems in the Turkish vernacular first appeared. By far the longest among these is the *Divan-ı Hikmet* (The Anthology of Wisdom), an alphabetical acrostic poem that runs over five hundred seventy couplets. Both the structure and contents of the *Divan-ı Hikmet* point to the celebrated alchemical poem *Shudhur al-Dhahab* (The Nuggets of Gold) by Ibn Arfa' Ra's (d. 1197) as a likely model and source of inspiration.³ Relative to the *Divan-ı Hikmet*, the *Sirr-ı Ta-Ha* is a short poem whose most extensive version consists of thirty-nine couplets with the *nun* rhyme or, more precisely, rhyming with *an*. The latter poem is noteworthy for its striking first verse that proclaims the divine mystery of two letters of the Arabic alphabet: *ta* and *ha*. These two letters are among the so-called disjointed letters (*al-huruf al-mukatta'at*) with which some Qur'anic chapters (*suras*) begin, including the twentieth *sura* that starts with the letter combination *ta ha* and is accordingly known as *sura Taha*.⁴ For Muslim alchemists, this *sura* was significant for its narration of the encounter between Moses and the Pharaoh during which time two transmutation miracles take place: the staff of Moses and the "white hand" of Moses. The reputation of Moses as a prophet who had access to transmuting power and alchemical knowledge, in addition to the aforementioned Qur'anic narrative, gave rise to the widespread use of his staff and white hand as alchemical imageries.

The *Sirr-ı Ta-Ha* describes the process of creating the greater elixir only in the briefest of terms. Its elliptical expressiveness must have contributed to the poem's popularity and to the composition of at least two extensive commentaries. The composer of the poem is a certain Shaykh Safi. Early on in the manuscript tradition, however, this otherwise unknown Shaykh Safi was transformed into Safi al-Din Ardabili (d. 1334), the eponymous founder of the Safavid order and the ancestor of Shah Ismail Safavi (r. 1501–1524) of Iran. It should be noted that even the intense rivalry and periodically hostile relations between the Ottomans and the Safavids did not condemn the memory of Safi al-Din Ardabili among the mystics of the former empire. The fourteenth-century saint was still well-respected to the west of Tigris in this period, although his sixteenth-century descendants were deemed to be heretics by their Ottoman rivals.⁵

The Commentaries of the Sirr-ı Ta-Ha

The *Sirr-ı Ta-Ha* has two surviving commentaries: one that appears to be near-contemporaneous to the poem and that had been attributed to Eşrefoğlu 'Abdullah Rumi (d. 1469), and a later commentary, also in Turkish, that had been written by

a certain Dervish Hüseyin, the “fifth student” of Shaykh Şazili (al-Shadhili).⁶ The question of authorship for the former had been “settled” by the main text itself, in which the authorial voice identifies himself as Eşrefoğlu Rumi on numerous occasions. As the founder of the Eşrefi subbranch of the Kadiri order and the composer of some of the most popular hymns in the Turkish vernacular, Eşrefoğlu Rumi was among the most celebrated early Ottoman Sufi saints. Although it is certain that the commentary is pseudoepigraphic, it was very likely composed by a member of the Eşrefi-Kadiri order.

Dervish Hüseyin’s commentary strictly follows the structure of the poem and offers a line-by-line explication. Even though the pseudo-Eşrefoğlu Rumi commentary focuses only on a handful of couplets from the poem, it was decidedly more favored by aspiring Ottoman alchemists and has a far more extensive manuscript tradition. Indeed, almost half of this work is concerned exclusively with the letters *ta* and *ha*, which are mentioned in the first couplet of the poem. The popularity of the pseudo-Eşrefoğlu Rumi commentary, relative to that of Dervish Hüseyin, must at least in part be due to the fact that it does not limit itself to alchemy alone but also to several other branches of knowledge, such as “the science of letters” (*‘ilm-i huruf*), astronomy-astrology (*‘ilm-i nūcum*), and the science of divine names (*‘ilm-i esma*), which were deemed indispensable for the successful practice of alchemy by those who thought of themselves as “philosophers” (*feylesof*) and “sages” (*hekim*) rather than as mere alchemists (*kimyager*).

The commentator provides several interconnected layers of meaning for *ta* and *ha*, beginning with the commonly accepted view that *ta-ha* refers to Prophet Muhammad or, more precisely in the context of the commentary, the “Muhammaddan spirit” (*ruh-u Muhammedi*) from and due to which God was believed to have fashioned all beings in existence. This is followed by an analysis of the first verse according to lettrist principles that focuses on the properties of not only the letters *ta* and *ha*, but also *alif* and the point (*nukta*). The inclusion of the letter *alif* and the point in this analysis is rationalized by the first verse of the poem itself: “by the truth of the secret of *ta-ha*, [of] the sun and the luminous moon.” As the commentator explains, the word “secret” (*sirr*) also denotes the long line in the palm of one’s hand that resembles the letter *alif*. The “truth” (*hakk*), on the other hand, in the context of letters, denotes the point, from which all letters take shape.⁷

Together, *ta*, *ha*, *alif*, and the point take center stage through much of the commentary. The departure point for the next section, for example, is once again *ta*, *ha*, *alif*, and the point, but this time with respect to their astronomical/astrological significance. Other letters are gradually introduced, but always as a result of their numerological relationship with *ta* and *ha*. The *abjad* values of these two letters, nine and five, respectively, are key to this end: when the two are added, the result is fourteen, which can also be represented by the letters *ya* and *dal* (the *abjad* values of these two letters being ten and four, respectively). When *ta* and *ha* are multiplied, the result is forty-five, which then provides the opportunity

to introduce two new letters: *ha* and *mim* (five and forty). These additional letters open up new exegetical possibilities, in lettrist, astronomical/astrological, and alchemical terms. They are also associated with various divine names of God by the commentator in a subsection. Throughout these multiple layers of meaning, one finds remarkable consistency with respect to the methodology followed by the commentator. In the subsection on '*ilm-i esma*', for example, the aforementioned "point" (*nokta*) is added to *ta*, which then becomes *za* and signifies the divine name *al-Zahir* (The Manifest).

The eighth couplet of the poem, in which "the prince of China" (*şehzade-i Hitay*) is mentioned, gets the second most extensive treatment in the commentary. The demarcation of all seven climes are explained, together with the planets that reign over them. The commentator then returns once again to the true subject at hand and introduces the well-known alchemical terms "eastern mercury" and "western mercury," which are necessary for the creation of the elixir. Here, the commentary takes an apologetic turn and makes an important distinction between the "outer elixir" (*iksir-i berrani*) that merely changes the appearance of a metallic substance and the "inner elixir" (*iksir-i cuvvani*) that actually transmutes base metals into silver and gold. Practitioners that dabble in the production of the former are strongly condemned, thereby defending the true seekers against criticisms of fraudulence. The final section of the commentary revisits the subject of eastern and western mercury and discusses an allegorical sexual union between a human being and a *jinn*.

Although the commentary treats a number of distinct branches of knowledge, it is only within the context of alchemy that the pseudo-Eşrefoğlu Rumi draws on earlier texts. As one would expect, a significant number of alchemical authorities are cited, including Jabir ibn Hayyan, Ibn Wahshiyya, Razi, and Tughra'i. More important for the commentator, however, were three specific works: the celebrated Arabic alchemical poem *Shudhur al-Dhahab* of Ibn Arfa' Ra's (d. 1197), and the *Nihayat al-Talab fi Sharh al-Muktasab fi Zira'at al-Dhahab* and the *Burhan fi Asrar 'ilm al-Mizan* from among the writings of the Mamluk sage Aydamir 'Izz al-Din al-Jildaki (d. after 1343–44).⁸ Indeed, long excerpts from the latter's writings in Turkish translation are included in the commentary. Even more striking is the high praise reserved for al-Jildaki, who is singled out for his contributions to Eşrefoğlu Rumi's understanding and mastery of the divine art.

The "Jildaki-connection," when considered together with the supposed identity of the commentator, brings up an interesting problem: what is the relationship between the commentary and the so-called 'Ali Çelebi corpus? This late sixteenth-century corpus of alchemical writings was arguably the most important body of work on the subject of alchemy that had been composed in the Ottoman world. Individual works from the corpus had circulated anonymously for nearly three decades after their composition, but by the seventeenth century the corpus came to be associated with 'Ali Çelebi, the author of the *Divan-ı Hikmet*. More research is needed before any conclusions can be drawn about the relationship

between the pseudo-Eşrefoğlu Rumi commentary, the *Divan-ı Hikmet*, and the ‘Ali Çelebi corpus, but it is almost certain that they were all products of the same circle of alchemist-authors based in late sixteenth-century northwestern Anatolia.

The Manuscript Tradition

The extant copies of the *Sırr-ı Ta-Ha* and its commentary by pseudo-Eşrefoğlu Rumi are too numerous to discuss here. For the purposes of the translation included in the present volume, two manuscript copies were consulted: Vienna MS A.F. 327 and Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade 359. The former manuscript includes the oldest dated copy of the commentary, which was completed on 13 Rabi’ al-akhir 1021 (June 13, 1612). Its age notwithstanding, there are several copy errors in the Vienna MS, and in these instances, Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade 359, which had been copied in 1661–62, has been consulted.

TRANSLATION

Excerpts from The Secret of Ta Ha

By the truth of the secret of ta-ha, [of] the sun and the luminous moon, and by the truth of the word of God to which the spirit of the beloved is the proof

The literal meaning of *sırr* is something secret, hidden.⁹ Another meaning [of *sırr*] is to have sexual intercourse.¹⁰ Yet another is the line in the middle of one’s palm that resembles the letter *alif*. The *ba* in *bi-hakk* (the truth) is for partition. It is in fact the word *secret*, which is modified, [but] due to the meter of the poem, the word “truth” comes after it. The literal meaning of *hakk* is “not false,” something that is “true.” It also denotes “the Truth,” that is God.¹¹ A further [meaning] is someone who is upright and honest . . . it also means *din-i hakk* (the true religion), which the Arabs call *hakk*.

According to the foremost *muhakkikin* (verifiers), what is meant by *ta-ha* is the Pride of the Universe, the Apostle of the Lord of Worlds (that is, Prophet Muhammad).¹² God the Most High created all creatures from the light of Pride of the Universe’s spirit. The [verifiers] came to the conclusion that *ta-ha* consists of this spirit. Accordingly, the meaning here is “we swear to the truth of the hidden secret, which is the mystery of the *ruh-u Muhammedi* (Muhammadan Spirit). . . .” What is meant by “the luminous moon” is the full moon, so *ta-ha* is the sun of prophethood and the full moon of the day of apostlehood. . . . The meaning of the second stich is “we swear to the truth of the Word of God, to which the spirit of the beloved is the proof. . . .” The beloved is the first-created Muhammadan Spirit—this spirit is the holy spirit that came into being as a result of the divine command, which is the word *kun* (*be*). *Kun* has been created from [the letters] *kaf* and *nun*. What all scholars call *cemi*’ *‘alem* (the entire

cosmos) is an allusion to this [act of creation], the truth of the divine command. This is the word of the Lord of Worlds: “And they ask you about the spirit. Say ‘the spirit is of the affair of my Lord’” [Q. 17:85]. The proof that it is *kun* that has been meant by the divine command is this verse: “. . . when He intends a thing that He says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is” [Q. 36:82]. The spirit that came into being by this command is that of our Sultan and Sovereign, the beloved of God, Muhammad the Chosen One. Indeed the sovereign of creation said: “The first [thing] God created is my spirit. . . .”¹³ What has been said [thus far] is the exoteric meaning of the couplet.

The shaykh’s allusions in this [couplet] are in two manners, the first one being lexical and the second semantical. The first manner [of allusion], which is lexical, is as follows. In the first stich, the shaykh mentions *ta-ha*, which are among the *huruf-u mukatta’at* (disjointed letters) invoked in the Magnificent Qur’an, and thereby calls to mind their secret and the truth of their secret. The secret of letters is *alif* and the truth of *alif* is the *nukta* (point), because when three points come together they become *alif*. When of average [length] *alif* consists of five points and when it is long it consists of seven points. When the points in *alif* are depicted in [a particular way], they form [the letter] *ba* and in another the letter *cim* or yet another the letter *dal*.¹⁴ Thus in this fashion all letters take shape from *alif*. And *alif* itself consists of points. Thus the coming together of points is the truth of *alif*, which is the secret of letters.

Having declared “the truth of the secret of *ta-ha*,” the shaykh invokes the image of one point, one *alif*, one *ta*, one *ha*.¹⁵ The fact that he expounds the letters *ta* and *ha* with the sun and the moon indicates that he is making an allusion to the jargon of astrologers. In almanacs, the depiction of [the letter] *alif* represents the number one, that of *ta* represents the number nine, and that of *ha*, five.¹⁶ Astrologers are wont to write the numerical values of letters instead of numbers. [As for] the point, it does not represent a number, but rather [refers] to Aries. *Alif* [refers to] Taurus, *ta* to Capricorn, and *ha* to the sign of Virgo. In this case, “.” is Aries, “a” Taurus, “t” Capricorn, and “h” Virgo. Aries is the house of Mars, Taurus is the house of Venus, [thus] the point and *alif* allude to Mars and Venus. These are the signs of Aries and Taurus. The letters *ta* and *ha* are the signs of Capricorn and Virgo, which allude to Saturn and Mercury. This points to the *teslis* (trine) of Mars and Venus in several ways.

First, in the jargon of astrologers, the trine is when one planet is at a certain sign of the zodiac, a second planet at another sign, and there are three signs of the zodiac between them. For example, the ascendant of Mars is at Capricorn and the descendant of Venus is at Virgo. Then there are three signs between Capricorn and Virgo: Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius. This is called the trine of the ascendant of Mars and the descendant of Venus. The word *ta-ha* fittingly indicates this [trine]. From Capricorn to Taurus, there are three signs in between. Taurus is the house of Venus. Capricorn and Taurus are the trine signs of Venus. Therefore the image of “a-t-h” denotes this trine. These three letters both represent the earth sign trine in almanacs and also their numerical values conform to the trine

in question.¹⁷ [They conform] because Taurus is the first sign of the [earth] trine. The numerical value of *alif* is one. Virgo is the fifth sign. The numerical value of *ha* is five. Capricorn is the end point of the trine and if one starts counting from the beginning of the [earth] trine, it is the ninth sign, which is the numerical value of *ta*. Thus the apparent and hidden [aspects] of *a-t-h* alike indicate the trine. Reflect on this well!

Second, there are two kinds of points in almanacs: one is “the point of *i’tidal*” (the autumnal equinox), which is the point of Aries and Libra, and the other is “the point of *inkilab*” (solstice), which is the point of Capricorn and Cancer. The shaykh alludes to these points. He [actually] intends numbers with *alif*, *ta*, and *ha*, and refers to the ranks of trines. The point is the origin of *alif*. When *alif* is counted from the beginning, which is the point, the image of *a-t-h* renders four trines in terms of its numerical value. The first [trine] reaches from “the point of Aries” (the vernal equinox) to Leo. Then it reaches Sagittarius. Then it arrives at Aries. The second trine arrives from “the point of Libra” (the vernal equinox) to Aquarius and from thence to Gemini.¹⁸ Then it reaches Libra. The third trine arrives at Taurus from the point of solstice [at] Capricorn. From thence it arrives at Virgo and finally reaches Capricorn. The fourth trine reaches Scorpio from the point of solstice [at] Cancer and from thence to Pisces. Afterward it arrives at Cancer. Just as the point of autumnal equinox ends at Gemini, the point of solstice ends at Pisces. These four trines are those of Mars and Venus.

The first trine is the ‘*amel-i mahzuf*’ (operation of removal), which is the first part of the concealed operation.¹⁹ The books of sages mention this trine. This is why [‘Izz al-din Aydemir al-Jildaki writes “thrice occurred the trine. . . .”²⁰ Shaykh [Safi] says “by the truth of the secret of *ta-ha*.” When it is numbers that have been meant by these two letters, then the secret of the numerical value is their truth, which is the number one. This is so because all numbers come into being from one. For example when one is added to one, they become two. If another one is added, they become three. In this manner all numbers come into being.²¹ The truth of *ta-ha* is one, whose image is “1.” The numerical value of *ta* is nine and that of *ha* is five. [Together] the secret of the numerical value of *ta-ha* is fourteen. Astrologers write fourteen as *ya-dal* (*y-d*) in almanacs.²² The image of *y-d* represents the lunar approach to *Kaid*.²³ *Kaid* is an inauspicious star that traverses each zodiacal sign in twelve years. In almanacs, this image of *y-d* also represents the fourteenth lunar mansion, which is called *Simak*.²⁴ It is the third of the [lunar] mansions in the sign of Libra. The same image is also used to denote in [astrological] terminology to refer to the *za’id* ([lunar] increase) whereby the moon moves from *Ras* (The [Dragon’s] Head) toward *Zeneb* (The [Dragon’s] Tail) and then back towards *Ras* from *Zeneb*.²⁵ The former is called the auspicious increase, and the latter is called the inauspicious increase.

Y-d, which is the hidden numerical value of *t-h*, is composed of two letters: one is *ya* and the other *dal*. The letter *ya* refers to the sign of Pisces. [*Ya*’s] essence refers to Jupiter, its shape to Aquarius, and its number to Capricorn. The letter *dal* refers

to Mercury, [while] its essence refers to the sign of Leo, and its number to the sign of Cancer.

The shape of 1, which is the truth of *ta-ha*, is the number of one. [This shape] is the image of *alif*.²⁶ Its number is a sign for Aries, whereas its shape is a sign for Taurus. When the shaykh wrote “by the secret of *ta-ha*,” he [in fact] declared the shapes of “1” and “*y-d*.” With the mention of “the sun and the luminous moon,” he made it clear that he is referring to celestial phenomena. Note the wisdom [of the shaykh in identifying] *ya* and *dal*, which is the hidden numerical value of *ta-ha*, as the letters for Jupiter and Mercury . . . Pisces is the house of Jupiter [and that of] the descendant Mercury . . . altogether, [*y-d*] alludes to the conjunction of Jupiter and Mercury at the sign of Pisces. Consider well that the aforementioned signs (*rumuz*) are from the Qur’an. They communicate that the Mighty Qur’an is miraculous, because [just] two letters indicate this many principles of the stars. Is this not a great divine mystery?

[MS Vienna A.F. 327, 102v]

In short, *ta-ha* alludes to the twelve zodiacal signs, nine stars, four trines, ascendants and descendants, to the two stations of the moon, one of which is at Libra and the other at Cancer, to *Kaid*, and to the points of equinox and solstice.²⁷ [It also] alludes to the numerical values of [various] ranks of trines and to that of the unity of the secret and the truth [of *ta-ha*].

What has been declared here is more detailed than the words of the author of the *Shudhur [al-Dhahab]* (*Nuggets of Gold*): “when Mars and Venus are in trine, when the Sun and the Moon are in line, and when Jupiter reaches Mercury and Saturn.”²⁸ That Shaykh Sayyid Safi has alluded to all of the abovementioned topics with just two letters indicates his mastery of the science of letters. He has uncovered what sages had concealed [in their writings]. The declaration of these allusions is the subtleties of the science of the elixir. With the grace of God the Highest, let us uncover its signs.

The signs here are of two parts. The first part is that of the first operation. “The head” (*ras*) alludes to earth and “the tail” (*dhanab*) to water. Earth and water are [the operation of] removal in the concealed operation. Mars is the eastern mercury and Venus is the western mercury. These two [mercuries] are known as the concealed operation. Saturn is an allusion to the “first marriage” (*tezvic-i evvel*). The Sun is the eastern mercury. The Moon is the western mercury, that is Venus, which is also called [the planet] Mercury. Jupiter and Mars are themselves (that is, tin and iron).²⁹ Aries is the equilibrium. Cancer alludes to the nine waterings, Libra to the end of the waiting period, Capricorn to [the process of] crumbling and Sagittarius to the duration thereof. Virgo is the six mercuries, Leo is the intensity of heat, and Aquarius [and] Gemini are the “temperate air,” [which is] the sal-ammoniac solution.³⁰ Taurus is the concealed mother. The descendant is the first melanosis and the ascendant is leukosis. The trine is the completion of [the process] of crumbling. The second part of the allusion is that of the second operation. [Here], “the head”

refers to the crown (*iklil*). “The tail” refers to the new body (*cesed-i cedit*). The [comet] Kaid is the second melanosis. Saturn is the “seventh heaven” and Jupiter is the “philosophical birth.” Venus is the nonflammable oil. Mars is the tincture. The Moon is white, [that] is the silvery elixir. The trine is the second preparation and the zodiacal signs are the ranks of waterings . . . if you have understood what is meant by [the aforementioned] astrological terms, then I was successful in explicating them, and you will realize that [the commentator] Shaykh ‘Abdullah Misri attained the knowledge of the concealed operation and of its successful implementation at the beginning of Saturn’s revolution, at the hour of Jupiter, the end of the moon’s revolution, [with] the rising Sun at the descendant of Mercury [and] the house of Mars at the trine of Venus.

“The sun and the full moon” [in the first stych] indicates that the shaykh speaks of the jargon of alchemists. This is because [alchemists] call gold “the sun” and they call silver “the moon.” Alchemists are wont to write one letter and refer to a particular substance. For example, with “k” they mean sulfur (*kibrit*) and with “n” they mean sal ammoniac (*nuşadır*). “H” is the letter of *hermes*, which is mercury. Another name for it is quicksilver (*farrar*). . . .

The intended meaning of the [word] secret in “by the secret of of *ta-ha*” is the elixir. This [elixir] is the consummated marriage, which is the secret of birth. Thus Tughra’i declares: “Wisdom is born from the marriage of sages.”³¹ Indeed, the boy who is in the mother’s womb was created through sexual union.³² The said sexual union is its secret/mystery . . . and [when] God the most high says: “I have breathed into him from my own spirit,” what is meant [here] is the eternal water.³³ The spirit is mercury. The beloved is the constant body . . . when the eternal water and mercury become one, the result is the inner elixir. It is the proof of true knowledge. Understand this well: the secret of letters is the source of the [science of the] balance.³⁴

[MS Vienna A.F. 327, 104v]

Let it be declared that the point is the origin of letters . . . *alif* and *ha* do not accept points, but *ta* does. [When *ta* takes on a point,] it becomes *za*.³⁵ This is the first letter of the [divine] name *al-Zahir* (The Manifest). It is the letter of the planet Mercury and reigns over the Mercurial sphere. [This letter] is the manifestation of the [divine] name *al-Muhsi* (The Reckoner). It alludes to the number of balances (*‘aded-i mevazin*) . . . the hidden numerical value of *ta-ha* is *ya-dal* (fourteen). *Ya* is the letter of the [celestial] footstool . . . and reigns over the Saturnal sphere, which is the seventh heaven. It is the manifestation of the [divine] name *al-Rabb* (The Lord). The letter *dal* is the elements of light (*‘anasir-ı nur*) . . . and reigns over the Lunar sphere. It is the manifestation of the [divine] name *al-Mubin* (The Evident). Together with the point, which is the origin of letters, *ya* becomes *tha*. This is because [the letter] *ya* contains two points that are underneath. When it acquires another point, the points are placed above the letter by necessity [and thus it]

becomes the letter *tha*.³⁶ [This letter] stands for the [divine] names [al-] *Ba'ith* (The Resurrecter) and [al-] *Warith* (The Inheritor). It denotes [one] becoming the inheritor of the world of composition's ('*alem-i terkib*) secret and the resurrecter of the dead. It is a manifestation of the [divine] name *al-Razzaq* (The Provider). It rules over the vegetable kingdom. [The aforementioned] have been declared according to the mysteries of letters—just as the point is the origin [of letters], the substance of the [philosophical] stone is the origin of the [alchemical] art. . . .

[MS Vienna A.F. 327, 105v]

Ta-ha has two hidden numerical values: the first one is fourteen, which is the result of the addition of nine (*ta*) and five (*ha*) and the second one is forty-five, which is the result of the multiplication of nine and five. [The latter] is *mim-ha*, that is forty-five.³⁷ The numerical value of Saturn (*Zuhal*) is also forty-five.³⁸ Saturn [in turn] is a sign for the moment of conception of the philosophical man, the duration of the pregnancy, and the zygote (*nutfe*). Another subtlety [of the poem] is the following: *Alif* is one, *ta* is nine, *ha* is five, altogether they amount to fifteen. Five times nine (*ta* times *ha*) is forty-five. Add fifteen [to forty-five and the result is] sixty. *Ta* with a point, [that is to say the letter *za*], is nine hundred. Altogether they amount to nine hundred sixty. This is the numerical value of Jupiter.³⁹ It alludes to Jupiter, which is the vegetable degree . . . if ten and four, the numbers in *ta-ha*'s [first] numerical value, are multiplied then the result is forty. This is [the numerical value] of the letter *mim*, which signifies the philosophical man . . . [thus] the multiplication of *ta-ha* is man, understand this well so that you will realize the perfection of Shaykh Sayyid Safi and recognize the commentator's gift to you. . . .

With "the word of God" the shaykh refers to [the letters] *kaf* and *nun*.⁴⁰ The letter *kaf* is the second preparation . . . it consists of a spirit and a soul. [The letter] *nun* is the second body. [The word] *kun*, which is composed of *kaf* and *nun*, is nothing other than the elixir. It is *insan-i kamil* (the perfect man) that is *kutb-u ma'nevi* (the moral pole). Just like Jesus, the Spirit of God, it revives the dead. Alchemy is also called "the science of *kaf*," because, as the exegetes have established, *kaf* denotes *Kafi*, meaning *Hasabi* [sic], the "All Sufficient."⁴¹ Both are among the [divine] names of God and they both mean that God is able to fulfill the needs of all created beings. The numerical value of *Kafi* is one hundred eleven. It has the same value as [the word] *pole* . . . , which is the secret of man [just as] *alif* is the secret of letters.⁴² The elixir that bears the name *kafi* is the "pole of riches," which is the secret of *insan-i felasefe* (the philosophical man).⁴³ Hence this honored science has been called "the science of *kaf*." But God knows best.

I pronounced in comprehensive, not condensed, fashion, that you may
know without doubt

I have rendered the difficulties [of alchemy] easy.

The commentator says: In truth, from the first operation to the last, [the shaykh] has made his pronouncements based on the hidden [properties] of letters and through [the letters] *ta-ha*. “So that you will know without doubt,” [refers to] the signs that are declared in the Mighty Qur’an . . . for would it be possible to derive so many signs from any other [source]? Sayyid Safi uncovered the [hidden] meaning through the light of the power of sainthood.⁴⁴ The ancient sages (*hukema-i mütekaddimin*) had no understanding of this meaning, [because] he who does not have a mastery of the science of the secret of letters cannot understand it.

[MS Vienna A.F. 327, 107v]

I have attained [the knowledge of] this honored science (that is, alchemy) through the book of Jildaki [titled] *Nihayat al-Talab* (*The End of Searching*). Praise be to God who guides us along the straight path, I have become knowledgeable in the science of sages and attained the ability to perform [alchemical] operations according to their precepts. When the shaykh says, “ask for a single mouthful so that you will you be elated,” he refers to the fact that you should seek out the true operation if you become a seeker and avoid operations that are vain. This is because the operation of the elixir denotes the process of transmuting lead-mercury, tin, copper, and iron into gold and silver. If these take on the appearance of gold and silver, but are not in reality gold and silver, the elixir in question is called *iksir-i berrani* (outer elixir).⁴⁵ According to sacred law, this is forgery. It is unlawful coinage. If someone claims otherwise, then that person is an infidel and his marriage annulled. Whoever seeks this outer elixir is either a sinner or an infidel, as believers avoid it. This is a mouthful (*lokma*) that, once it is ingested, extinguishes the light of belief through the malice of the heart. [The person who ingests this mouthful] does not find the sweetness of faith in this world, and his stature in the afterlife is well-known (that is, he will be damned). If you indeed turn [base metals] into gold and silver, then this is the true operation—the lawful power that is derived from the qualities [of] prophetic knowledge.⁴⁶ In this life, it [grants] the tranquility of heart and in the next, eternal bliss. This [true] elixir is called *iksir-i cuvvani* (the inner elixir). It is differentiated from the outer elixir in the following manner. The metallic silver has two [distinguishing] properties. The first is that it can be refined and its weight is not diminished when it becomes pure. The second is that if “sharp waters” are applied to ten dirhams of pure silver, it becomes [silvery] water. [Followed by an extension discussion of properties of pure gold so as to differentiate real and fake precious metals.]

If it does not pass from these tests, [the work in question] is forgery. [Its agent] is an outer elixir [that does not change the actual properties of the metal]. Although it provides temporary comfort on earth, in the afterlife it [inflicts] grave punishment. If it is asked: why then do sages describe outer operations in their books, the answer is that sages are of two groups. The first group was not Muslim—they had no knowledge of the shari’a, had no faith in the judgment day, and believed the

universe to be eternal. Thus what they said [concerning the exoteric operation] was not unusual. The other group of sages is Muslim, like Jabir [ibn Hayyan], Razi, and Ibn Wahshiyya. When these sages talk about the outer elixir, they in fact refer to the inner elixir. . . .

If it is asked, “mercury is cold and moist, while the chemistry of silver [*gümüş kimyası*] is also cold and moist, then how does mercury become silver,” this is the answer: The chemistry of silver is moderately cold-moist relative to gold, copper, and iron, but it is [like] strong fire relative to mercury, lead, and tin . . . with its warmth, it moderates the coldness of mercury and with its dryness it moderates the moistness . . . it is said that the whiteness in silver is a result of the moderation of its coldness and moistness. Therefore it is known that the elixir is something that moderates [the natures] and not something that dyes. When [the elixir] is referred to as a dye, this is a metaphor. For if the moderation of coldness and moistness is attained, [the metal] must become white. If the moderation of hotness and dryness is attained, [the metal] must attain the color of gold. Colors are the direct result of moderation and this is why the elixir is said to be something that dyes. . . .

For instance, when the food consumed by a human is digested, it either turns to blood, or phlegm, or yellow bile, or black bile. If it turns to blood it becomes red, if it turns to phlegm it becomes white, if it turns to yellow bile it becomes yellow, and if it turns to black bile it becomes blackish green. Once it descends into the liver from the stomach, after having passed through the entire body, it becomes one of these substances and acquires [one of] four colors, none of which are similar to each other. If blood becomes phlegm, its red color turns into white, if it becomes black bile, it turns into blackish-green, if it turns into yellow bile, it becomes yellow. The change of color is due to blood acquiring the inner properties of these other substances and not because of a nonexistent coloring agent.

[MS Vienna A.F. 327, 122r]

The philosophical man becomes the holy spirit when it is free from the impurities of the flesh. Understand this well! It is Shaykh Safi who clearly expressed [this matter] and it is Eşref-i Rumi who explicated it [by his commentary]. Even though Jildaki himself spoke about it in his various works, he did so without explaining what the concealed operation entails. [Jildaki] does, however, allude to it. Indeed, had Jildaki not upon the science of wisdom (that is, alchemy) [found with] in the books of sages, it would be very rare for anyone to attain [the knowledge of] it, even if the books of Tughra'i were available. The master of Eşref-i Rumi 'Abdullah Mısri in this science is Jildaki. He understood the hidden meanings of the sages' [writings] and was able to realize the [alchemical] operations thanks to Jildaki's books.

Let the western bride marry the prince of Khitay:

to them a child is born who is the Sultan of Lunar perception.

The commentator says: The [word] western signifies Maghreb. The meaning here is “marry the bride from Maghreb with the son of the Sultan of Khitay.” This phrase refers to the most distinguished bodies of knowledge within divine wisdom and therein are several subtleties. The first one is that “the east” is the location from which the Sun rises and “the west” is where it sets. From its rise to its setting, the Sun traverses seven climes:⁴⁷ 1. India, 2. Hejaz, 3. Egypt, the Levant, and the Maghreb, 4. Babylon, 5. *Rum* (Byzantine Empire as well as Asia Minor), 6. *Türk* (“Tartary”), 7. China. . . .⁴⁸ The direction from which the Sun rises is the beginning of climes. The direction to which it travels is called the west, which is the terminus of all seven climes.

The clime of India begins in the east, crossing over where China touches [India]. From India it moves over Ceylon and then to the coastal southern part of Sind. From here it arrives at the Sea of Oman and crosses over to Yemen, Aden, Sa’na, and Abyssinia. It terminates at Maghreb after having moved over to the western lands from the southern portions of the lands of the Berbers. The zodiacal sign of this particular clime is Capricorn and its planet is Saturn [similar descriptions of the second and third climes].

Beginning in the east, the clime of Babylon traverses Khitay, Khorasan, Balkh, Hamadan, Sarkhas, Tus, the Caspian Sea, then the land of Rayy, Isfahan, Halvan, Niharuz [Nihavand?], Samarra, Mosul, Harran, Halab, Antioch, Tarsus, then across the sea to the island of Cyprus to finally the Maghreb and the Atlantic Ocean via Tangier. This clime’s sign is Sagittarius and its planet is Jupiter.

The clime of Rum begins in the east and crosses over the [realm of] Gog and Magog to Khawarizm, thence to Azerbaijan and Armenia, over the entirety of the lands of Rum, the [Mediterranean] Sea and the islands, terminating at the Sea of Maghreb after having traversed Iberia. The sign of this clime is Aquarius and its planet is the Moon.

The Turkish clime [also] begins in the east and crosses over the [realm of] Gog and Magog to Turkistan and Transoxiana, over Constantinople and Gallipoli to *Frenkistan* (Western Europe) and the Maghreb, terminating at the Atlantic Ocean. The sign of this clime is Cancer and its planet is Mars.

The clime of China traverses from the east to the northern parts of the [realm of] Gog and Magog, over Turkistan to the coasts of the Caspian Sea and thence crosses the Black Sea. . . . The sign of this clime is Leo and its planet the Sun. The word *Sin* is Arabic, and in Persian it is called *Chin*. The province of *Sin* is [the same as] the province of *Chin*. There is no land closer to daybreak than this one—it faces the rising Sun. The eastern part of China is called Machin, its western part the realm of Gog and Magog, and its central part is called *Khitay* or *Khitan*. [*Khitay*] is of the fourth clime. Its ruler is Jupiter and in this clime, the sultan is the said planet.⁴⁹ For a prince to appear when this planet is the sultan of the [fourth] clime, there needs to be a mother. The [prince’s] mother is the mother of natures (*ümmü’t-taba’i*).

This is the fire of tincture (*nar-ī taʿfīn*). As the author of the *Shudhur al-Dhahab* declares:

Become the knower of fire, [for] fire is the secret of preparations;
that which must be obtained from the fire is the mother of natures.

In his commentary [of the *Shudhur al-Dhahab*], Jildaki declares that the mother of natures is the fire of tincture, thanks to which the elixir can be created. Accordingly, the prince of *Khitay* is the child who appears with the fire of tincture when Jupiter is ascendant. This child is the eastern mercury.

[MS Vienna A.F. 327, 129r]

If it is asked: “how can a child be born from [the union of] a human and a jinn, because these are not of one kind? The answer is this: the jinn and humans are both “animals.” The jinn possess a spirit, a soul, and a body. Human beings also possess a spirit, a soul, and a body. And yet the bodies of jinn are fiery and those of humans are watery . . . the jinn, like humans, have speech and in appearance they resemble human beings. Other animals, however, only have a spirit and a body. They lack a “true soul.” Angels have souls, but no spirit. This is the reason animals [other than humans and jinn] and angels are not bound by the commands of shariʿa. For this reason, some refer to the eastern mercury as jinn, and to the western mercury as human. The evidence of Shaykh [Safiʿ]’s wisdom is that he refers to both [mercuries] as human—what is meant here is that while mankind is diverse, all human beings were created out of the water of semen. Thus God the Highest says: “and it is He who created mankind from water.” Just as all men and all women have been created from this water of semen, these two mercuries are also created out of water. Just as the water of semen appears as a result of the sexual union of a man and a woman, this watery [substance of the elixir] appears from the mixture of the eastern mercury with the western mercury.

NOTES

1. Chief among these are the dozens of Arabic alchemical books and treatises attributed to ʿAlī Çelebi İzniki (fl. second half of the sixteenth century) who continued to be recognized as the greatest of Ottoman alchemist-authors well into the nineteenth century. On his corpus, see Tuna Artun, “Hearts of Gold and Silver: The Production of Alchemical Knowledge in the Early Modern Ottoman World” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2013), 114–156, and *passim*.
2. There are numerous extant copies of these versified technical treatises, many of which are ascribed to well-known figures from among early Ottoman (and a number of pre-Ottoman) mystics, including Aşık Paşa, Emir Bukhari, and al-Ghazali. Vienna

MS A.F. 327 and Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade 359, which have been utilized for the translation of excerpts from *Şerh-i Kaside-i Sırr-ı Ta-Ha* in this volume, both contain several poems from the said cycle of alchemical poems.

3. The oldest dated copy of *Divan-i Hikmet* is Istanbul Üniversitesi MS TY 7016. Completed in Rajab 1009 (January-February 1601), this copy is incomplete and lacks the prose introduction found in later copies in which the author identifies himself as ‘Ali Çelebi of Iznik.
4. For an overview of Sunni scholars’ opinions on the disjointed letters, see Martin Nguyen, “Exegesis of the *huruf al-muqatta’a*: Polyvalency in Sunni Traditions of Qur’anic Interpretation,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 14, no. 2 (October 2012): 1–28.
5. This is not to suggest that Sufi orders that shared a common origin, real or imagined, with the Safavids were not a source of concern for the Ottoman administration. One must distinguish here the person and memory of Safi al-Din Ardabili from those orders whose chain of mystical authority reached back to him. Concerning one example of such an Ottoman order, the Halvetiyye, see John Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350–1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
6. One of the rare copies of this commentary by Dervish Hüseyin can be found in Atatürk Kitaplığı, Istanbul, MS Muallim Naci 573, ff. 65b–83b. The interest of the members of the Shadhili order in alchemy is well-known, as is the widely held belief that the founder of the order Abu l-Hasan al-Shadhili himself had been a practitioner. See Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn al-Sabbagh, *The Mystical Teachings of al-Shadhili: Including His Life, Prayers, Letters, and Followers*, trans. Elmdor D. Douglas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 17–18, 138, 214–15.
7. The letters of the Arabic alphabet were indispensable for the practice of *‘ilm al-mizan* (the science of balance/equilibrium), which is one of the characteristic features of Jabirian alchemy. The numerical values of letters that constitute the names of various metals were utilized to make calculations about their composition, which would then be used to transmute one metal to another.
8. On the latter major figure, see Nicholas Harris, “In Search of ‘Izz al-Dīn Aydamir al-Ğildakī, Mamlūk Alchemist,” *Arabica* 63, nos. 3–4 (2017): 531–56. *Nihayat al-Talab* has been studied by Manuchehr Taslimi, “An Examination of the ‘Nihayat al-Talab’ and the Determination of Its Place and Value in the History of Islamic Chemistry” (PhD diss., University of London, 1954), which also provides an extensive summary of the work’s contents in English.
9. The word *sırr* (Ar. *sirr*) has been variably translated as secret, mystery, or hidden according to context in this translation. In most instances, the first translation has been used to convey the unity of terminology between the poem and its commentary.
10. Similar to “criminal conversation” in old English law, which denotes adultery, the word *muhabbet* in Turkish can refer to both having a conversation and having a mutual affection toward one another and, by extension, to sexual intercourse. The latter was preferred here as (adulterous) sexual intercourse is among the well-established meanings of the Arabic word *sirr*.

11. *zat-ı pak* (pure essence, that is God) in Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade 359, 1r. Simply *zat* (“essence”) in Vienna MS A.F. 327, 96v.
12. On the early modern *muhakkikin*, see Khaled El-Rouayeb, “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006): 263–81.
13. *Awwal ma khalaqa ‘llahu ruhi*. While being rather popular, especially among Sufis, this hadith has no reliable chain of transmission.
14. In almost all copies of the Commentary, this section depicts the individual letters *alif*, *ba*, *cim*, and *dal* in dotted lines, often in red ink, to communicate their hidden composition from individual points.
15. The “truth” corresponding to the point and “secret” (*sirr*) to *alif*, the latter due to one of the abovementioned meanings of *sirr*, which is the *alif*-shaped line in the palm of one’s hand.
16. These are the numerical values of Arabic letters, a system that is known as the *abjad*.
17. Together, Taurus, Capricorn, and Virgo comprise the earth group of zodiacal signs. The earth trine, therefore, is the trine of these three signs.
18. “The [first] point of Aries” and “the [first] point of Libra” are both the vernal equinox, but located 180° apart from one another.
19. The first part or stage of the concealed operation involves removing the accidental qualities from metallic substances, hence *mahzuf* (deleted, removed).
20. ‘Izz al-Din Aydemir al-Jildaki, the celebrated fourteenth-century Egyptian alchemist. Other early modern Ottoman texts on alchemy, in particular the works of ‘Ali Çelebi, also testify to al-Jildaki’s esteemed position among the alchemists of the Ottoman world. On al-Jildaki, see Eric John Holmyard, “Aidamir al-Jildaki,” *Iraq* 4 (1937): 47–53; and M. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 237–42.
21. Note the parallel between the formation of individual letters from *alif*, and that of individual numbers from one.
22. The *abjad* value of the letter *ya* being ten and that of *dal* four, together they amount to fourteen.
23. On the subject of comets in general, and *al-Kaid* in particular, see E. S. Kennedy, “Comets in Islamic Astronomy and Astrology,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (January 1957): 44–51.
24. For a comprehensive discussion of lunar mansions in Islamicate astronomy and astrology, see Emily Savage-Smith, *Islamicate Celestial Globes: Their History, Construction, and Use* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 119–32. On the fourteenth lunar mansion (*Simak*) specifically, see pages 127–28.
25. Also known as the “dragon’s head” and “dragon’s tail,” these refer to the northern and southern lunar nodes, respectively. The astronomical phenomenon referred to here being the lunar passage across the ecliptic from the north to the south.
26. A reference to the resemblance of the shape of the letter *alif* to that of the Arabic numeral for one. The similarity is not merely one of shape, however, but also of relative importance in their respective ontological status: just as *alif* is the source of all letters, the number one is the source of all numbers.

27. The four trines are given a fuller treatment on MS Vienna A.F. 327, 101r.
28. The author in question is Ibn Arfa' Ras, the twelfth-century alchemist-poet, whose versified *Shudhur al-dhahab* (*Nuggets of Gold*) maintained its popularity among the alchemists of the Islamic world well into the nineteenth century. On Ibn Arfa' Ras, see Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*, 231–33.
29. Referring to the alchemical meaning of Mars in the context of the second operation, distinct from its meaning within the first operation.
30. Translation here is based on Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade 359, 7r.
31. The Turkish “translation” for the Arabic couplet is in fact an explication, and not a literal translation, of its first stich alone. The couplet in full is “*bi-nikah takawwun al-mawlud / ka-hin wa dhalika sirrun kabirun*.”
32. The word *nikah* is clearly used to denote a sexual union here. The conceptualization of the coming together of the elixir's constituents as a sexual union is not unique to Islamic alchemy.
33. *Wa nafakhtu fihi min ruhi*. Qur'an, 38:72.
34. *Sirr-i huruf 'ayn-i mizandır*.
35. The Arabic letter *za* has the same shape as the Arabic letter *ta*, but with a single point placed over it.
36. For in the Arabic alphabet (but not its Perso-Arabic variation, which was also used to write Turkish) the *ba* shape cannot take three points under itself. This is why the three points have to “move up” and constitute the letter *tha/sha*.
37. The *abjad* value of *mim* is forty and *ha* is five, together they add up to forty-five.
38. The *abjad* value of Saturn (*Zuḥal*) is indeed forty-five: *zay* (seven), *kha* (eight), and *lam* (thirty).
39. In fact, the *abjad* value of Jupiter (*Mushtari / Müşteri*) is nine hundred fifty. The commentator explains away the disparity with a cryptic reminder to count the last letter (*ya*) again, which does bring the total value up to nine hundred sixty.
40. The word of God being the command *kun* (“be!”).
41. *Hasabi* for *al-Hasib*.
42. The *abjad* value of *qutb/kutub* (pole) is one hundred eleven: *qaf* (one hundred), *ta* (nine), *ba* (two).
43. Almost certainly the same as the “philosophical animal” mentioned by earlier Arab alchemists. It denotes the belief that this particular elixir created by the sage alchemist was a living being.
44. In Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade 359, which was completed half a century after the Vienna copy, the alchemist-poet Shaykh Safi is already associated with Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili, the ancestor of Shah Isma'il Safavi. See Karaçelebizade 359, 9v.
45. The word *berrani* denotes both something that is outer, exterior, and something that is unlawful. In the case of this particular elixir, both meanings are appropriate and relevant: it changes only the exterior properties of metals, and it is described as being unlawful.
46. Based on Süleymaniye MS Karaçelebizade: *'ilmü'l-enbiya*. The Vienna copy reads *'ilm-i insan* (human knowledge).

47. For a recent treatment of climes in premodern Islamicate geography, see Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 87–114.
48. In early geographic works in Arabic, *Rum* refers to the Byzantine Empire in general. Long before the Ottoman period, this geographic term had already been associated more particularly with Asia Minor. The word *Rum* has accordingly been retained in the translation to convey this ambiguity.
49. Süleymaniye MS Karacelebizade 359, 25r.

FURTHER READING

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III. The Occult Sciences at the Mughal Court During the Sixteenth Century

EVA ORTHMANN

In the Mughal Empire, as elsewhere in the Persianate world, the occult sciences were of utmost importance. In the memoirs of Babur (r. 1526–1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty, a keen interest in omens and dreams already testified to a belief in cosmological correlations.¹ This situation gained momentum with his son Humayun (r. 1530–1540, 1555–1556), famous for his interest in astronomy and astrology, but who also was well versed in other fields of knowledge. His penchant for occult sciences and cosmology inspired him to undertake all kinds of strange inventions and innovations, which are recorded in the sole historiographic work commissioned by him, the *Qanun-i Humayuni*. We thus learn that he used to wear garments colored according to the respective planet of each day, that he built a talismanic building, and that he celebrated the so-called talisman feast.

Our understanding of these inventions and their symbolic meaning is rudimentary in many cases.² The emperor's orientation toward occult sciences corresponded to widespread trends in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was supported by certain Sufi circles who integrated magic practices into their devotional exercises. Humayun's son and successor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) picked up some of his father's practices, such as dressing in each day's planetary color, and further elaborated a specific sun worship.³ In particular, the writings of Akbar's chief ideologue Abu l-Fazl 'Allami (d. 1602) demonstrate the great extent to which the importance of astrological and lettrist notions persisted during that emperor's reign and were mingled with messianic and millenarian ideas.

The texts chosen for translation reflect both the period of Humayun and Akbar and shed light on the role of lettrism, astrology, and astral-letter magic at the Mughal court as well as in Sufi circles. All the texts were penned by writers from the emperor's entourage; two of them served as close advisers and confidants to their respective patrons. This close relationship points to the legitimizing function of the occult sciences, which were often used either to confirm the status of the ruler or to associate him with celestial powers.

MUHAMMAD GHAWTH GWALIYARI:
THE FIVE JEWELS (K. AL-JAWAHIR AL-KHAMS)

Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari (d. 1563), the author of the following text, was an eminent Sufi in the time of the Mughal emperor Humayun (r. 1530–1540, 1555–1556). He belonged to the Sufi order of the Shattariyya, which traced its origins to Central Asia and spread to Northern India during the second half of the fifteenth century. When Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, went to India, he came into contact with Muhammad Ghawth and his brother Shaykh Phul. Both acquired respected positions at court in the time of Babur's successor Humayun. Shaykh Phul was so close to the emperor that during internal struggles between Humayun and his brothers Shaykh Phul was killed in 945 (1538–39) by Humayun's opponents. When Humayun went into exile in Iran, Muhammad Ghawth moved to Gujarat where he stayed until Humayun reconquered Northern India in 1555. After Humayun's death, Muhammad Ghawth and the Shattariyya lost their political prominence and he was reduced to a respected, but much less influential position.⁴

Muhammad Ghawth authored several texts. Among them his Persian and Arabic translations of the *Amrtakunda* (a Sanskrit treatise on Yoga)⁵ and his *Kitab al-Jawahir al-Khams* (Book of the Five Jewels) are the most famous. While the translations of the *Amrtakunda* belong to the realm of texts translated from Indian languages into Persian, *The Five Jewels* deals with five central aspects of Sufi practice: prayer ('*ibada*'), asceticism (*zuhd*), invocation (*da'wa*), litany (*dhikr*), and action ('*amal*').⁶ The translated passage below is from the third chapter on invocations. These invocations are based on lettrist analyses of the Most Beautiful Names of God (*asma' Allah al-husna*). Muhammad Ghawth lists forty-one divine names, each of them composed of several nouns and adjectives. These names are invoked either all together or separately according to specific rules, relating both to external circumstances during the invocation as well as to the mode of recitation, the repetition of words or single letters, and the total number of recitations. Muhammad Ghawth describes in detail the effect of each of these forty-one names. Many of these effects are quite spectacular, providing the invoker with tremendous power. The strangest and most peculiar effects, however, are those associated with the subjugation of the

planets, by reason of which the *Kitab al-Jawahir al-Khams* is often referred to as an exemplar of astral magic.

While this is not true for the rest of the book, the invocation of these seven names do belong to the realm of astral magic, although the invocations and their expected effects are quite different from what we find in other such texts. Although planets are usually invoked and addressed directly, and then asked to fulfill a specific desire, in the case of the *Kitab al-Jawahir al-Khams*, the invocation is made via the recitation of one specific divine name. This invocation can be used for other ends as well, but by observing specific conditions, the invocation results in the subjugation of a planet, in the case given below, the Sun.

The specific interest of this text follows first of all from the close relationship between its author and Humayun, who himself was very interested in astrology and other occult sciences. Although no direct traces between what we know about Humayun and this text have yet come to light, it stands for the kind of texts adopted and perceived at court. Furthermore, the text mingles lettrist speculations with astral magic in a very peculiar way, which has not yet been observed in other texts, and demonstrates the extent of magic speculations made by certain Sufi groups in India in the sixteenth century.

The *The Five Jewels* was translated into Arabic early on and later also into Urdu. No edition of the original Persian version exists today, so this translation is based on the Arabic edition.⁷

Translation

THE THIRTEENTH NAME:

“O BLAMELESS ONE DEVOID OF ANY EVIL BY HIS HOLINESS”

This is a name that belongs to the realm of beauty.⁸ It is especially apt to attain anything related to the heart and to subjugate demons and mankind (*al-jinn wa-l-ins*) and to summon them. You recite it for forty days, 15,000 times each day. You begin on a Saturday in the hour of Saturn on the ninth or the twelfth of the month.

Any person who performs his ablutions on a Wednesday and puts on clean and pure clothes and recites it in an empty house 2,051 times, to him seven chiefs from among the spirits (*arwah*) will appear. And if he gives up [eating] animals belonging to the realm of majesty and beauty some days before beginning with the recitation, his mind will be pure, so the spirits will like his company, and he will not be destroyed by the view of marvelous and strange things.

The sign by which they (that is, the spirits) can be recognized is that they are dressed like Turks, and that they are wearing the crown of sovereignty on their head, and that their faces are like moons, and that the walls are filled with light from the reflection of their gleam when they arrive and stand in front of the praying person and talk to him. The praying person however must not talk to them, but must busy himself repeating the name that he recites publicly until they say to him: “O

creature of God, what is your need, what concerns you, what is your aim? Explain your situation to us!"

The praying person will then say to them: "O creatures of God, you have honored [me] and behaved in a friendly way and conferred a favor on me, may God be pleased with you because of your obedience to the name and your attendance to the prayer. My aim and my expectance from you is that you help me at X place and X time, or with respect to X occurrence happening to me, be it good or evil, from friends or adversaries. Empower me and look after me in friendship, do not deprive me of your kindness and benevolence, and fulfill all my needs."

He then stands up and puts his right hand on his chest and says: "O beloved ones of God, may God honor you just as you have honored me. Give me the token to set my heart at rest, and to be a means to call for you at the time of need, so that you provide for my needs."

They will respond: "You do not need any token henceforth. We will come at the time of need and provide for your needs." He will then say: "Yes, you are like that for us, and you are capable of doing so, but I request a token lest I need the prayer another time." And when they hear the name of the prayer, they give him the ring immediately. It looks like a bird's egg with a green inscription on it. He treats it with reverence and rubs it with earnestness and says: "I ask you to teach me this script, so I can read it." They then teach him the names written [on it] and explain to him the particularities of the script that they teach him, and advise him to protect the ring and to keep it from the eyes of menstruating women, those who are not his kinsmen, sinful people, and liars.

Then, he makes apparent to them [their] defeat and subjugation and says to them: "I grant you leave, and you are given honor. I commend you to the protection of God, and allow you now to return to your abodes and to come to me [only] in time of need." And so they will: when he has any need, he recites the names written on the ring seven times, and they arrive. He must also make use of incense. They will then provide for his need, on the condition that he is ritually pure and clean at the time of prayer and commits no mistake.

Many secrets are related to this prayer, which he⁹ does not show for as long as possible. Any person who wants to recite this name to subjugate the Sun has first of all to focus his thoughts, perform an ablution and purge his interior (*batin*) from [attachment to] possessions, achievements, rank and worldly diffidence. He then embarks upon this prayer by reciting it continuously and uninterruptedly for up to 150 days for its effect to appear, without counting the number of recitations. Mostly and during the majority of hours, he will be facing the Sun, after finding a remote place and solitude. Whenever one of the secrets of the Sun is disclosed to him, he does not reveal it to anybody with whom he is not familiar, but hides it. This prayer is called the prayer of the Sun, and the subjugation of the Sun. In his heart, he shall always bear in mind that he subjugates the Sun, and he shall comply with this task and repeat the first and the last and say: "O Sun, fulfill my prayer to God Almighty." He says [this] clearly in a strong

and loud voice, while he recites the great name in a normal voice until the mentioned period has elapsed.

When it has elapsed, he will see with his own eyes that the Sun descends from the sky and approaches the praying person in a condition in which she¹⁰ looks bigger than usual. And when she comes close to the praying person, her figure is transformed into that of a cow's head, and then she changes into a beautiful appearance and elegant form, whose sight rejoices the practitioner. He will be delighted by her beauty, and not bewildered by her approach. She behaves graciously toward the practitioner in the manner of friendship and love. And the Sun becomes his associate by talking to him, and she asks him: "What is your desire, O praying person?"

He then expounds his desire to her in a fluent and suitable tongue and recites the name in a beautiful and soft voice, and looks at the face of the Sun like a novice of the Sun (*murid shamsi*), until the Sun embraces him and sheds light on his presence, and speaks to him saying: "I have accepted you. Wherever you are and whatever you want, I will provide you with what you need, and I pledge that whenever you call me, I will come to you and fulfill your desire." And when the witness of the sphere (*shahid al-falak*) addresses him with these words, the praying person knows for certain that she will come to him and does not lie. The praying person then stands up and places his hand on his chest to glorify the Sun and behaves very respectfully toward her until the one who has descended from the heavens reascends thereto. The praying person follows her with his eyes until she reaches her usual place. The praying person then observes her, and is at that moment in the presence of his observed object and does not turn to anybody else.

At that time, many creatures appear to him and say to him in a loud voice: "Rise and place him (*sic*) on the throne! For you are our ruler today, because we have removed our former ruler. We accept your rule."¹¹ All the creatures express agreement with these words. But the praying person must not pay attention to their words, and not sit down on the throne to avoid causing offense, because this is a great ruse; he must rather seat somebody else as his deputy in his place and wait for forty [days] until they come once more to request the praying person. At that time, he rises and takes his seat on the throne. His rule will then last for a long period by the decree of God Most High, and God Most High will give him success. And he will rule in every regard according to what pleases God, and he will be commissioned therewith. And if he desires his rule to last and the might of his prosperity to increase, he must act according to the requirements of the holy verse "And take provision; but the best provision is godfearing."¹² So he accumulates provisions in this world and the next in order that by the blessing of his company, all his followers proceed successfully, and the people follow the religion of their rulers, and the godliness enables the praying person to stay on the right path. And God is the guide.

MUHAMMAD FADIL SAMARQANDI: *JAWAHIR AL-'ULUM-I HUMAYUNI*

The *Jawahir al-'Ulm-i Humayuni* (Jewels of Humayunic Sciences) is an encyclopedic work dedicated to the Mughal emperor Humayun. The encyclopedia thus belongs to the relatively small corpus of texts preserved from this emperor's environment. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about its author, Muhammad Fadil b. 'Ali b. Muhammad Miskini Samarqandi. He does not seem to have written any other book and is not mentioned in sources relating to Babur, Humayun, or Akbar.¹³ We therefore have to be content with the little information contained in the *Jawahir al-'Ulm*, which shows him to be a man of vast knowledge who lived at least up to the time of Humayun's return to India (1554).

Subdivided into three books (*maqalat*), the encyclopedia contains altogether 120 chapters on all kinds of subjects, including poetry, calligraphy, grammar, and logic, but also etiquette, jurisprudence, medicine, historiography, and—in the second part of the third *maqala*—occult sciences. We find therein, among other things, chapters on astrology, lettrism, talismans, geomancy, alchemy, and the subjugation of the planets.¹⁴ Although the encyclopedia has never been studied in detail, the author apparently copied entire chapters from earlier treatises; this is at least the case with his chapter on breath control, which corresponds to the chapter on *'ilm-i dam* (science of breathing) and *'ilm-i wahm* (science of imagining) from Amuli's *Nafa'is al-Funun*.¹⁵ The chapter on the subjugation of the planets is very similar to the invocations of the planets in the *Ghayat al-Hakim*, but shorter, rendering only the phrases with which the praying person addresses the planets directly. Because of such alterations, it is improbable that as-Samarqandi copied these passages directly from the *Ghayat al-Hakim*, but his model was certainly somehow related to that tradition.

The differences between as-Samarqandi's (and the *Ghayat al-Hakim*'s) invocation of the planets and Muhammad Ghawth's prayers are striking. In as-Samarqandi's version, the planets are addressed directly. The praying person appeals to Saturn, Jupiter, and so forth by imploring the planet, which is first called by its name and then entitled with epithets. The request of the praying person and the effect of the prayer are not specified. The great names of God are irrelevant in these invocations but are mentioned in the chapter on *da'wat al-asma'* (invocation of the names) of as-Samarqandi's encyclopedia. We may thus assume that these names were well known in the early sixteenth century but only exceptionally used for the invocation of the planets; maybe this use was even introduced by Muhammad Ghawth.

As-Samarqandi's encyclopedia has not yet been edited. The text is preserved in three copies in the Ganj Bakhsh Library in Lahore (MS 301), in the Maulana Azad Library at the Aligarh Muslim University (MS University *'ulum-i farsi* 87), and in

the Khuda Bakhsh Library in Patna (MS 910); the latter, however, does not contain the parts on occult sciences. The two copies from Aligarh and Lahore both contain several misreadings and misspellings, resulting in uncertain interpretations. The translation has been based on the wording of as-Samarqandi's text;¹⁶ only unintelligible words have been corrected in consideration of the reading in the *Ghayat al-Hakim*. Most of the original text is in Arabic; passages originally in Persian have been indicated in the translation.

Translation

EXCERPT FROM THE THIRD BOOK FROM THE *JAWAHIR AL-'ULUM-I HUMAYUNI* ON THE SUBJUGATION OF THE SEVEN PLANETS

The invocation of Saturn:¹⁷ O lord whose name is mighty, whose significance is great, whose standing is elevated and whose degree is high! You are Saturn, the dry and cold, the one who brings oppression and bad luck, who is just in his words and his anger, single in his grief and sadness, who has relinquished joy, the most worthy by your great benefits and pleasure, the haughty, the holder of measurements, the rational, the just, the quick-witted, the old man who renders sad and unhappy the miserable, and happy whom he renders happy. I ask you, o guiltless father, by the right of your great benefits and your noble character, I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish.

The invocation of Jupiter:¹⁸ O lord who is blessed and wise, and who is pious and self-denying, skillful and of great standing, the venerable,¹⁹ good and beneficent, who renders rich and who is true to his commitment, I ask you, o father, by the right of your praiseworthy character and your precious qualities, I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish such and such. [*In Persian*]: This means that he here speaks his wish.

The invocation of Mars:²⁰ O lord who is eminent and oppressing, the dry with a brave heart who draws off the blood, the vanquisher²¹ and victor, experienced in the use of the palm branch,²² the one who brings torture and harm and imprisonment and sorrow and slandering,²³ the scarce one who is fortunate for somebody who comes to fight, the stupid and strange, the bearer of weapons who has married many times, I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish such and such. [*In Persian*]: This means that he here speaks his wish.

The invocation of the Sun:²⁴ O lord who is dry and hot, the enlightening one, entrusted with wisdom, you dominated the fight of the stars so they obey you and you became manifest for them, and this [implies that] when you go away from them, they come back to you. By your light, they take fire and by your shining, they radiate. You have superiority over all of them. You are the king over them and they are lucky when you look at them, and unlucky when you join them [through combustion]. And when you mix the knowledge of your favor, you obtain evil by it. I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish such and such.

The invocation of Venus:²⁵ O lord who is blessed, the wet and temperate one, the fragrant one with beautiful characteristics, the laughing one, possessor of jewelry and adornment and happiness and gold and silver and entertainment and [good] temperament and joy and recitation by which the lutes are set in motion. And the associate of amusement and [good] temperament, the victorious and futile and dreadful, the moving one, the beloved and [?], the one with good wedding, the master of happiness, I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish such and such with regard to such and such.

The invocation of Mercury:²⁶ O lord who is outstanding and sincere, the just, intelligent, endowed with reason, and with bright understanding,²⁷ the savant and writer who takes into consideration the news from the skies and from earth, with little joy, who brings financial advantages²⁸ in trade. Master of malice, slyness, and hypocrisy, the one on whom people rely, the vigilant, the sincere, the one who is congruous with great and trivial things. No characteristics of yours are known, by God. You were not created with a description, and did not obtain one. You are fortunate with the fortunate and inauspicious with the inauspicious, male with the male and female with the female. And with what happens during the daytime, you are related to the day, and with what happens during the night, you are related to the night; you adapt yourself to them in their natures and resemble them in their similarity to you. I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish such and such.

The invocation of the Moon:²⁹ O lord who is auspicious, the cold and wet, the beautiful and merry, judge in the regulation of love and entertainment and joking and amusement, master of letters and information, summit of concealment, the full moon (*badr*) and the liberal, the merciful and wise. Your sphere is the closest one to us among them, and you are the one with the greatest benefit and damage. You are the one who unites the stars, the virtuous one who brings together some of them owing to their light. Because of your goodness, everything becomes right, and because of your weakness, everything is spoiled. And God provides you with mercy, honor and precedence. I ask you to fulfill my desire and my wish this and that.

[*In Persian*]: It is necessary to write down this spell at the end of every spell he composes out of two names and to produce it according to the number of these letters. It is the following: I set ablaze³⁰ and I burnt and I awakened affection in the heart of this woman, daughter of so-and-so, by the right of this composite word and the spirits and by the right of “*ya hayy ya qayyum*”³¹ toward me and the earth and the heavens and by the right of these obscure letters. Haste, haste, now, now, hurry, hurry!

ABU L-FAZL ‘ALLAMI: AKBAR-NAMA

The *Akbar-nama* of Abu l-Fazl ‘Allami (d. 1602) is probably the best-known and most famous account of the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605).³² Abu l-Fazl, the author of this chronicle, was the chief ideologue at Akbar’s court. Born in 1551 in Agra, he encountered persecution at an early stage when his father,

Shaykh Mubarak, was accused of heresy. In 1574, he came to the court of Akbar where his brother Fayzi had already served earlier as poet laureate. He soon won the confidence of the ruler and became his close adviser.³³

Abu l-Fazl had a profound influence on the development of Akbar's religious doctrines and was crucial in shaping his imperial ideology, the so-called *din-i ilahi* (divine faith). One cornerstone of this ideology consisted in depicting Akbar as the "perfect man" (*insan-i kamil*), a concept deeply rooted in Islamic mysticism and elaborated especially by Ibn 'Arabi in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This "perfect man" was imagined as a human being of the highest moral and ethical standing and distinguished by having reached the final goal of mystical experience, the essential oneness with God. His rank was considered similar to that of prophets.³⁴ In the time of Akbar, the notion of the "perfect man" was projected onto the emperor to legitimize the outstanding and quasi-superhuman position he assumed not only in worldly affairs but also in religious matters. Abu l-Fazl actively helped in promoting this imperial image and did so not least in the *Akbar-nama*. The portrayal of Akbar as a "perfect man" pervades this book, impregnating the representation of the emperor from the very first to the very last page: Akbar is described as the most perfect creation, long expected and announced, he assembles all positive characteristics in his person, is illuminated by the divine light, he has a higher spiritual standing than any Sufi master, and so on.³⁵

The four passages selected here are good examples of the presentation of this imperial image. In all four of them, the superiority of the ruler and his chosen nature are demonstrated by referring to occult sciences. In the first case, the author refers to lettrism. Lettrist speculations about the attribution of the planets, the zodiacal signs, and the four elements (fire, earth, air, and water) to the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet, and calculations based on the numerical value of the letters are applied here to the name of the emperor Akbar. According to Abu l-Fazl, Akbar's name is distinguished by two specifics: first, each of the four letters of his name belongs to a different element. His name thus comprises the four elements in perfect equilibrium. And second, the numerical value of Akbar corresponds to the numerical value of *aftab*, or Sun. The specific importance of this equation must be understood in the context of the high prominence of the Sun and its veneration in the time of Akbar. The emperor virtually symbolized and represented the sun on earth and imitated its daily and annual course by specific acts. The numerical equivalence of Akbar's name and the word *aftab* was thus perceived as further proof of this close relationship. It is important to note that the numerical value can only be equated here when we do not take the "normal" numerical value of the word *aftab*, but the so-called indications of its letters.

One further issue is worth bearing in mind: it is highly probable that the lettrist symbolism of Akbar's name was not accidental but intentional. Because it was not Akbar himself who chose his name, but his father Humayun, this lettrist symbolism confirms the great importance of lettrism in the time of Humayun and thus bears further witness to the relevance of this science under Akbar's predecessor. In spite

of what Abu l-Fazl wants us to believe, the lettrist symbolism of the name has much more to do with Humayun's expertise in this field and his deep interest in occult sciences than with Akbar's "chosen" nature.

Humayun's expertise is all the more apparent in the other passages, which are all related to the ascendant and the horoscope of Akbar. Although reduced to the role of a passive observer who rejoices at the future greatness of his son, the second Mughal emperor's knowledge of astrology is reflected in his preparation and explanation of the horoscope. By claiming that a divine intervention delayed the moment of birth, and by ascertaining that Akbar's ascendant is even better than that of Timur, the ancestor of the Mughal dynasty and so-called lord of conjunction,³⁶ these passages from the *Akbar-nama*³⁷ artfully depict Akbar's support by occult forces and his superiority over all mankind.

Translation

THE LETTRIST SIGNIFICANCE OF AKBAR'S NAME

When this sublime feast³⁸ was over, [Humayun] named this holy jewel according to a vision of the unseen world and a divine indication, as has already been explained, with this highest surname and greatest name,³⁹ and had it fixed and inscribed on the pages of felicity and on the flagstones of dominion. After two years and four months, the interpretation of this truth-adorned vision thus became evident.⁴⁰

God be praised, what a sublime name and precious talisman that came down from the heaven of magnificence and the sphere of light and dark!⁴¹ From east to west, the splendor of this name and the ray of its holder encompasses [the world].

Among the many noble things related to this name of marvelous disposition, one is what my elder brother who unites perfections of the terrene and the spiritual world, the poet laureate, Shaykh Abu l-Faiz Faizi, has demonstrated in one of his marvelous writings, namely, that it belongs to the rare correspondences related to the mysteries of letters—which are the words of the sublime existences and whose influences are manifest to the fullest in the world of isolation and assembly pursuant to the differences in the degrees and steps of binding and connection⁴²—that the indications of the letters of the word *aftab* (Sun), whose numerical value is 223, correspond to the numerical value of the letters of the word *akbar* (the greatest).⁴³

The light that manifests from the world-adorning Sun
Also manifests from the face of the exalted great king.
For Akbar is related to the Sun:

This mystical signification is manifest in the indications of the names.

It furthermore belongs to the mysterious meanings of this illustrious name that those who are versed in the signs of *jafr* and *taksir* [methods of divination] and who

know about the signs and combinations of letters and who recognize the dispositions of articulate sounds and words—who are aware of the secret stations of the [divine] essence and the manifest ones of revelation and have knowledge about the bright or dark condition of the letters by considering them free of dots and dotted—have attributed to each of the four elements seven of the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet. The well-balanced letters of this sublime name assemble all four grades (that is, elements) and thus provide information on the entirety of degrees of beauty and greatness and all other attributes of excellence and perfection. Thus, the letter *alif* (ا) belongs to fire, *kaf* (ك) to water, *ba* (ب) to air, and *ra* (ر) to earth. Whenever a name is composed of letters belonging equally to all [four] elements in such a way that no element is missing and none repeated, this name is within the boundaries of its essence in perfect equilibrium. And this is an innate equilibrium that affects the bearer of that name by [providing him with] a good temperament, a healthy body, a long life, a prospering fortune and long-lasting happiness.

Within this [context], another point has also found access to the window of perception: because of this great fortune,⁴⁴ no matter how many enemies appear, they will be annihilated and scattered, because the letters of this name are composed and arranged in such a way that *kaf* and *ba* constitute its middle letters. *Kaf* belongs to water and removes its upper enemy, the fire, and *ba*, belonging to air, scatters its lower enemy, which is the earth.⁴⁵ Those who are aware of the subtleties of the secrets must acquire knowledge of the symbols of sublime signs of this marvelous name and aid in the spread of felicity and blessings by its bearer.

AKBAR'S BIRTH AT A MOST AUSPICIOUS MOMENT

A rare event that happened shortly before the manifestation of the light of good fortune was the following: before this auspicious moment, nature required to give birth. Mawlana Chand, the astrologer, who, by royal order, was present at the threshold of chastity to determine the ascendant, became agitated [and said]: “Just now, the moment is inauspicious. However, in a few hours,⁴⁶ an auspicious moment will arrive such as happens only once in 1,000 years. I wish the birth could be delayed!” The people present at the assembly made light of this, [saying]: “What benefit is there in this? These things cannot be chosen!” At that instant, the requirement ceased. To some extent, his (that is, Mawlana Chand's) mind was put at ease with the inauspicious moment's passing.

The outward reason for this great gift was the following: at that time, they brought a midwife to take on responsibility for this service. Because she was ugly in countenance, the holy spirit of her majesty Maryam Makani⁴⁷ expressed aversion at the sight of her. And her well-balanced temperament became disturbed, so that this urgency did not persist in her nature.

And when the chosen moment was coming close, the Mawlana became anxious that this moment should not pass. The intimates of the holy *haram*⁴⁸ let him know: “Her majesty of the most eminent cradle has found some rest after much labor and

is sleeping. It would not be appropriate to waken her. Whatever the incomparable God in His will has decreed will happen.” While they were talking in this way, a violent pain awoke her majesty Maryam Makani. And at that auspicious moment, this peerless jewel of the caliphate whose fortune is awake appeared.

[‘Allami, *Akbar-nama*, 1:18–19]⁴⁹

PREPARING THE HOROSCOPE OF AKBAR

The authorities of science, whom Alexander himself would have estimated,⁵⁰ and the specialists in the astrolabe, who fix the astronomical tables and constantly take part in the assembly of the occult as the confidants of the heavenly secrets, turned the horoscope of the ascendant for this fortunate birth into a mirror of the illumination-receiving mind: they reported on the aspects of the planets and the total conjunctions and the details of the astrological decrees and the consequences of their influence with regard to the duration of life and the height of progress on the ladder of rule and the degrees of caliphate. An abridged draft of these tables will be reproduced.

They compared the marvelous conclusions and deductions regarding the indications of the horoscope of this divine model, which were based on his majesty the paradisaical world-protector’s (*jahanbani jannat-ashyani*) own investigation—who had a high standing in the mathematical sciences and whose thoughts attained the celestial spheres, because the discerning mind of his majesty was the exhilarating mirror of Alexander and the world-revealing cup of Jam—with the results that the other specialists had discovered from the occult signs with regard to the effects of the simple spheres and the consequences of the substances and bodies. They found everything in perfect mutual accord.

[‘Allami, *Akbar-nama*, 1:21]⁵¹

EXPLANATION OF THE WISDOM IN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS AND THE ASTROLOGERS FROM INDIA WITH REGARD TO THE AUSPICIOUS ASCENDANT OF HIS MAJESTY, THE SUPREME KING

Some of the scholarly authorities of these days surmised that the disagreement between the astronomers of India and the sphere measurers of Greece—the former indicating that his majesty’s ascendant is in Leo, and the latter in Virgo—occurred because of the scholars’ discrepancy with regard to the precession. . . . Those who discern the inner truth and who understand the heavenly secrets are perplexed because of this disagreement and these sources of variance. But now that the leading scholar of our days, ‘Adud ad-Dawla Amir Fathullah Shirazi,⁵² has established the fortunate ascendant of the supreme king by Greek rules and Persian precepts and has confirmed it to be Leo—as has been shown—it becomes apparent that the source of this difference was not what they surmised, especially not that the

scholars from India do not acknowledge the existence of celestial spheres, as will be explained in the second volume.⁵³ Rather, the divine wisdom and zeal required that the situation of this rider on the field of magnificence and resident of the secluded place of greatness should be hidden and concealed from the thoughtful sight of those who know and see the smallest subtleties, as well as from the eye of evil thinkers whose heart is blind.

It is for this reason that his majesty the paradisaical world-protector (that is, Humayun)—who among the enthroned people with insight into subtle distinctions had superior knowledge about the exact use of the astrolabe and the realities of astronomical tables (*zij*) and observations and who was a second Alexander the Greek—was not able to determine the ascendant of the lord of time in spite of much endeavor and effort. And in the same way, the other people who know the secrets of astrology remained behind the curtain of contradiction and did not cooperate with respect to this rare matter.

For all the conformity between the rules of computation and the research of right-thinking calculators—because today's experts show less disagreement in these things—by the requirement of divine zeal, the truth of the holy horoscope remained hidden behind a veil and covered in contradiction.

Altogether, with each of these horoscopes—whose drafts will be shown—if considered with impartiality, it becomes obvious that with regard to knowledge of God and divine understanding and with regard to elevated standing and rank as well as both outward and inward eminence, there cannot be a second one like him. Although the horoscopes differ from each other, they agree in [him being] the outer and inner ornament of the state, and congratulate the possessor of this ascendant for his supremacy in the outer and the inner [world].

People close to his majesty the paradisaical world-protector, whose outer and inner being was adorned with rightness and propriety, were heard saying that when his majesty looked at the horoscopes with the auspicious ascendants and studied them, it sometimes happened that in the retirement of his private rooms, with the doors closed, he fell to dancing out of sheer affection and moved in circles out of emotion.

Yes indeed, those sitting in the highest place at the court of true delight and the cupbearers at the table of eternal knowledge, who receive the delights of the sweetness of divine ecstasy and knowledge—why should they not be out of their senses from gratitude at attaining these pleasures? And why should they not murmur in excessive love and ecstasy from excess of joy and cheerfulness? For accession to the eminent degrees of these perfections is tantamount to knowledge of God.

And because of his perfect essence, his majesty the paradisaical world-protector perceived the flashings of the things to come and future circumstances, and the perfection and good fortune of this most holy royal being. All these lights became visible in the mirror of this marvelous horoscope before they came into effect. Repeatedly, he explained to those worthy of his speech that with regard to some sublime matters, the ascendant of this luminary of good fortune is several degrees

better than the ascendant of the Lord of Conjunction (*sahib-qiran*),⁵⁴ as is evident to those who look closely at the tables of astrological rules. And if one compares these two precious documents of bliss and weighs the effects of the planets and the auspicious [influences] of the upper planets with respect to each other with careful consideration, one discovers what information is contained in the horoscope of the Lord of Conjunction vis-à-vis that in these holy horoscopes.

[‘Allami, *Akbar-nama*, 1:41–43]⁵⁵

NOTES

1. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 60–74.
2. Eva Orthmann, “Court Culture and Cosmology in the Mughal Empire: Humayun and the foundations of the *din-i ilahi*,” in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (London: Routledge, 2011), 203–9; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 113–25.
3. Heike Franke, *Akbar und Ġahangir: Untersuchungen zur politischen und religiösen Legitimation in Text und Bild* (Schenefeld: EB-Verlag, 2005), 224–31; Orthmann, “Court Culture and Cosmology,” 209–12.
4. For information on Muhammad Ghawth, compare Carl W. Ernst, “Persecution and Circumspection in Shattari Sufism,” in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 418–24; Scott Kugle, “Heaven’s Witness: The Uses and Abuses of Muhammad Ghawth’s Mystical Ascension,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 1 (2003): 7–12, 24–35; Eva Orthmann, “Lettrism and Magic in an Early Mughal Text. Muhammad Ghawth’s *k. al-Jawahir al-Khams*,” in *The Occult Sciences in Pre-Modern Islamic Cultures*, ed. Nader el-Bizri and Eva Orthmann (Beirut: Ergon-Verlag 2018), 224–26.
5. Carl W. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga in the ‘Amrtakunda’ Translations,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 2 (2003): 203–5.
6. Carl W. Ernst, “Jawaher-e Kamsa,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 14 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2008), 608–609; Orthmann, “Lettrism and Magic.”
7. Muhammad Ghawth al-Hindi, *al-Jawahir al-khams*, ed. Aḥmad ibn al-‘Abbas, (Cairo: Muḥammad Rif‘at ‘Amir, 1973), 1:165–68.
8. Divine names are divided into names belonging to the realm of beauty (*jamal*) and names belonging to the realm of majesty (*jalal*). A third category consists of names belonging to both realms: Ghawth al-Hindi, *al-Jawahir al-Khams*, 2:112–16.
9. The subject of this sentence is not evident.
10. In Arabic, the sun is feminine. For this reason, I use “she” in the following instead of “it.”
11. It would make more sense to translate: “rise and place yourself on the throne, because you are our ruler today,” but in both the Arabic and the Persian version, the imperatives in this sentence are in the plural form, whereas the rest of the sentence is in the second person singular.

12. Qur'an 2:197, respectively, 2:193. English translation: Arthur John Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Allen Unwin, 1963, 1971), 1:55 (here: Sura 2:193).
13. Muhammad Husain Tasbihi, "Jawahir ul-'ulum-i Humayuni," in *Wahid* 211/212 (1356/1977), 34–35.
14. For an overview of the chapters, see Tasbihi, "Jawahir ul-'ulum-i Humayuni," 40–42, and "Manuscript Catalogue: Persian Volumes," Khudabakhsh Library, 9:144–50, <http://kblibrary.bih.nic.in/>.
15. I owe this information to Kazuyo Sakaki who is currently working on that text.
16. Qadi Muhammad Fadil as-Samarqandi, *Jawahir al-'ulum-i Humayuni*, MS Ganj Bakhsh No. 301, fol. 498b–499a, and MS Maulana Azad Library, MS University 'ulum-i farsi 87, fol. 741 a–b.
17. Compare with Maslama b. Ahmad al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim wa Haqq an-Natijatain bi t-Taqdim*, ed. Hellmut Ritter: "Picatrix": *Das Ziel des Weisen von Pseudo-Mağriti* (Leipzig/Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1933), 203: 10–16.
18. Compare with al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim*, 205: 5–10.
19. I read الشخي instead of الشيخي.
20. Compare with al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim*, 211: 13–212: 3.
21. القاهر, epithet of Mars.
22. Instead of النطاس بالجريد, al-Majriti has الطياش الحاد = the inconstant and impetuous, which probably makes more sense.
23. I read النمية instead of الثمية, which does not make any sense.
24. Compare with al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim*, 217: 15–218: 4.
25. Compare with al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim*, 219: 10–18.
26. Compare with al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim*, 221: 18–223: 8.
27. I read ساطر instead of شاطر.
28. I read مفيد instead of مفسد.
29. Compare with al-Majriti, *Ghayat al-Hakim*, 223: 18–224: 11.
30. The text has هجبت instead of هجبت
31. Vocative particle with the epithets of God, hayy = living, qayyum = everlasting.
32. For the *Akbar-nama*, see, for example, Richard M. Eaton, "Akbar-Nama," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1985), 1:714–15; Stephan Conermann, *Historiographie als Sinnstiftung: Indo-persische Geschichtsschreibung während der Moghulzeit (932–1118/1516–1707)* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Reichert, 2002), 159–73.
33. For biographies of Abu l-Fazl, see, for example, Richard M. Eaton, "Abu'l-Fazl Allami," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1985), 1:287–89; Conermann, *Historiographie als Sinnstiftung*, 96–101.
34. Gerhard Böwering, "Ensan-e Kamel," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1998), 8:457–61.
35. Historiographical concepts and narrative strategies in the *Akbar-nama* are described in detail in Conermann, *Historiographie als Sinnstiftung*, 159–73.
36. Babur was on his father's side a descendant of Timur Lenk or Tamerlan (r. 1370–1405). *Sahib-qiran*, lord of conjunction, is an honorific title bestowed on Timur that points to his astrological preeminence.

37. Abu'l-Fadl 'Allami, *Akbar-nama*, ed. Agha Ahmad 'Ali and 'Abd al-Rahim, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Baptist Mishan Press, 1877–1886), 1:21–22.

For a partial translation of this text into German, see Franke, *Akbar und Ġahangir*, 232–33; for a complete translation into English, see Abu'l-Fadl 'Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl: History of the Reign of Akbar Including an Account of His Predecessors*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1897–1921), 1:64–68; Wheeler Thackston, trans., *The History of Akbar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 1:77–79.

38. Just before the translated passage, the author describes a feast arranged by Humayun on the news of his son's birth.
39. The expression “greatest name,” اسم اعظم, is usually applied to the greatest name of God, *Allah*.
40. The text refers here to a vision that occurred, according to the *Akbar-nama*, on the fourth of Rabi' ul-awwal 947, that is two years and four months before the birth of Akbar on the fifth of Rajab 949. In this vision, Humayun learned about his glorious son and his name: Abu'l-Fadl 'Allami, *Akbar-nama*, 1:13.
41. According to lettrist notions, letters are at the heart of the universe and belong to the first and innermost grade of the world. Such ideas are described, for example, by Muhammad Ghauth al-Hindi, *al-Jawahir al-Khams*, Ed. Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas (Cairo: MuHam-mad Rif'at 'AAmir, 1973), 2:120.
42. This again refers to lettrist notions: the primordial letters take shape in the existing world in the form of the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet. They can both be isolated or assembled into words. Letters are said to have different degrees (*darajat*): *k. al-Jawahir al-khams* I, 98.
43. The numerical value of the word *akbar* is: a (1) + k (20) + b (2) + r (200) = 223. The expression “indications of letters” (بينات الحروف) refers in the context of lettrism to a specific method of calculation: first, the single letters are written out, in the case of *aftab*, we thus get الف – فا – تا – الف – با. Then, the first letter of each written-out letter is discarded, resulting in ل – ف – ا – ا – ل – ف. Finally, the numerical value of these letters is calculated: l (30) + f (80) + a (1) + a (1) + l (30) + f (80) + a (1) = 223. Compare with 'Ali Akbar Dih-khuda, *Lughat-nama*, ed. Muhammad Mu'in et al., 16 vols. (1377; repr., Tehran, Tehran University Publications, 1999); see also 'Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, 1:65n4.
44. Play on words, in Persian, it is اين سعد اكبرا, which also means because of this fortune of Akbar. سعد اكبر is furthermore an epithet of Jupiter.
45. “Upper” and “lower” in this context are related to the notion that earth and water are lower elements, and air and fire are upper elements, the former tending toward earth, and the latter tending toward the sky.
46. Beveridge points to a different reading in another edition and translates this as “in a short time”: Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, 1:56n1.
47. Literally the dweller in the place of Maria, Akbar's mother.
48. The women's quarters.
49. For an English translation of this passage, see 'Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, 1:56–57; Thackston, *The History of Akbar*, 65–67.

For a discussion of these passages and the four horoscopes, see Eva Orthmann, “Circular Motions: Private Pleasure and Public Prognostication in the Nativities of the Mughal Emperor Akbar,” in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology*, ed. Günther Oestmann et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 101–14.

50. This refers to Alexander the Great, who is considered a seeker of knowledge in Persian tradition.
51. Fathullah Shirazi was an eminent astronomer at Akbar’s court and responsible for the calculation of *the ilahi-era*, Akbar’s own calendar: Sharif Husain Qasemi, “Fath Allah Širazi, Sayyed Mir,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1999), 9:421.
52. English translation by Beveridge: ‘Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abu’l Fazl*. 1:64; Thackston, *The History of Akbar*, 77–79.
53. This probably refers to Abu’l-Fadl ‘Allami, *A’in-i Akbari*, ed. Heinrich F. Blochmann (Calcutta: Baptist Mishan Press, 1872–1921), 3:7.
54. This epithet is particularly associated with Timur, ancestor of the Mughal emperors.
55. English translation by Beveridge: ‘Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abu’l Fazl*, 1:119–24; Thackston, *The History of Akbar*, 139–45.

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PART IV. Literature and the Arts

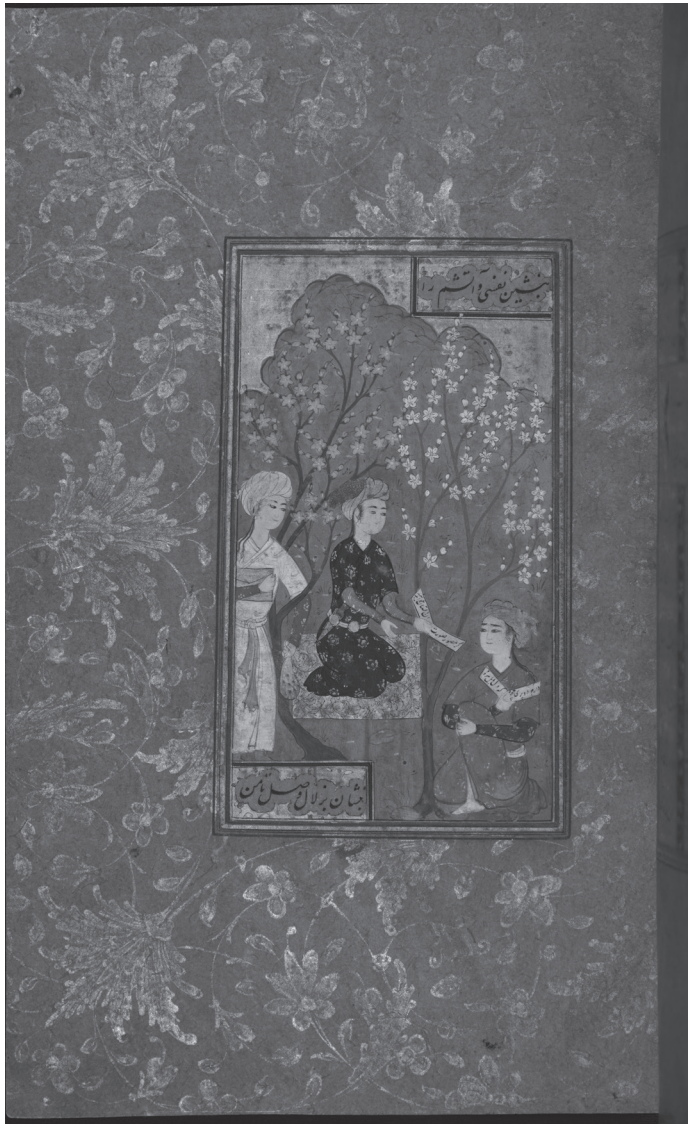


FIGURE 9.1

An illuminated illustration of three young men exchanging poetry in a garden from a collection of short love poems by Nur al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492). The manuscript was scribed by the famed calligrapher Muhammad Zaman al-Tabrizi. The verses inscribed in the corners read: “Sit for a while and extinguish my fire [of love] with your presence.”

Source: Manuscript W.651, fol. 3A

Date: 1589–1590 CE

Place of origin: Iran

Credit: Walters Art Museum

9. Three Poets and the Three Literary Climes

Poetry is the highest medium of literary expression, and it flourished in new ways in the early modern era as literate communities built on the region's rich traditions. Many streams of commonality were rooted in the pre-Islamic period, more specifically, in the late antique literary traditions. These communities benefited greatly from this shared heritage in the production of their own literature. Knowledge of Arabic, the Qur'an, hadith, and the vast exegetical corpus greatly enhanced major languages of the arts such as Persian, Turkish, and, albeit to a lesser extent, Sanskrit, which prevailed at courts and in scholarly circles of the era. With the flourishing of Sufi literature from the thirteenth century onward, the Persian language became a major strand connecting some of the literate communities of the three empires as Sufi guides and their disciples articulated their spiritual experiences and teachings. Many scholars in eastern Islamic lands adopted Persian as a medium of literary expression, and many theologians, jurists, philosophers, and scientists who primarily wrote in Arabic also composed poetry in Persian.

Poets experimented with new modes of abstraction and symbolism, drawing on the conventions of the *ghazal* (lyric poem) and the *qasidah* (ode), which had been perfected by the masters of previous centuries. This chapter explores how celebrated poets of each empire found ways to reinvent and reshape classical leitmotifs in their respective works and engaged with contemporary sociopolitical and religious concerns, thereby challenging the view that the early modern era witnessed a widespread decline in poetic creativity.

In the first essay, Paul Losensky presents the poetry of Muhtasham Kashani (1528–1588), who developed a close association with the Safavid court society. Muhtasham dominated the blossoming literary life of sixteenth-century Iran. As his many odes to Shah Tahmasb and other members of the ruling elite indicate, he actively engaged with the politics of the Safavid court. Losensky explains that his panegyric poetry not only promotes the careers of his patrons but also projects the public image of the dynasty. The poems for which he is most famous today, his strophic elegies on the Shi'ite imams, do not mention a royal patron, but they legitimate Safavid power through their celebration of the state-sponsored religious ideology.

Muhtasham was equally active in the popular literary scene beyond court circles. As Losensky further explains, his many lyric ghazals set the fashion for amatory poetry in a realistic mode (*maktab-i vuqu'*), which flourished in Persian poetry of the sixteenth century, and his purportedly autobiographical treatise "The Lover's Confection" (*Nuql-i 'ushshaq*) chronicles his adventures in the urban demimonde. His large collection of occasional chronograms commemorates a wide range of events, from the deaths of his friends and rivals to the birth of a child, the dedication of a building, and appointment to high office. The selection of poems from Muhtasham's works includes samples and excerpts of all of these themes and genres, representing not only the varied facets of his oeuvre but the many functions of poetry in the political, social, and cultural life of early modern Iran.

In the second essay, Berat Açı examines the developments in Ottoman literature through study of the seventeenth-century poet scholar 'Azmizade Haleti. A selection of poems from his collected works, *Divan*, is translated along with explanatory notes. As Açı explains, Ottoman literature in general, and poetry in particular, underwent a major transformation in the later sixteenth century, which was especially felt among the poets of Istanbul, the capital of the empire. Haleti was active in Istanbul, and his work can be viewed both as a turning point in the aesthetics of Ottoman poetry and as representative of the so-called transformation. The excerpts from Haleti's *Divan* show his uniqueness in literary aesthetics in establishing a direct relationship with his milieu. For example, the poem related to Abu Ayyub al-Ansari reflects his deep connections to the city of Istanbul. The ghazal regarding the controversy over tobacco consumption, for instance, demonstrates both sides of his poetry, the use of a new element (tobacco) in society as a figurative as well as an aesthetic expression.

In the third essay, Audrey Truschke explores the significant role Sanskrit literature played within the Mughal literary and cultural landscape. The sources chosen include excerpts from *The Book of War* (*Razmnama*) and *The Treasury of Compassion* (*Krparasakośa*), both written in the later part of the sixteenth century. The Mughal emperor Akbar ordered the translation of the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic written in Sanskrit, in the 1580s. The project took a team of translators several years to complete and thereafter was lavishly illustrated and widely copied. Of the nineteen books of this translation, book twelve, the Shanti Parvan, stands

out as eliciting particular imperial attention due to its relevance to kingship. In it, Bhishma, the family patriarch, offers advice to the soon-to-be-enthroned king, Yudhishthira. This work sheds light on the nature of ancient political advice and its reception at the center of Mughal power. It also allows us to see how literature (both prose and poetry) was being redefined in Mughal India, the importance of translations within Mughal literary culture, and how the Mughals related to the ancient history of the subcontinent and its legacy of non-Muslim kingship. The excerpt here illustrates Bhishma's royal advice from *The Book of War* (*Razmnama*), the Persian translation of the Sanskrit Mahabharata.

The second excerpt is from Shanticandra's *Treasury of Compassion* (*Krparasakosa*). Shanticandra wrote his *Treasury of Compassion*, a Sanskrit poem, around 1590 to "enlighten Shah Akbar." This poem is one of several Sanskrit works written explicitly for the enjoyment and edification of Akbar and his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. This body of material remains virtually unknown to Mughal historians largely because few modern Mughal historians work with Sanskrit sources, and these texts have never been translated. Indeed, Shanticandra's poem is enigmatic in terms of its reception because, so far as we know, Akbar did not comprehend Sanskrit. Nonetheless, this poem and others like it project an imperial reception and accordingly constitute an important part of Mughal literary culture. *The Treasury of Compassion* furthermore contains valuable descriptions of the early Mughal kings, Akbar's childhood and military conquests, imperial administrative practices, details of Akbar's marriages to Rajput women, and Akbar's *din-i ilahi* (discipleship program). Translations of this poem make it available for the first time to Mughal scholars and students who do not read Sanskrit. In addition, it broadens our conception of Mughal literary culture as a sphere not restricted to Persian, Turkish, and Arabic but also encompassing works in Sanskrit and a variety of other Indian languages.

I. Selections from the Poetry of Muhtasham Kashani

PAUL LOSENSKY

Kamal al-Din Muhtasham was born in the city of Kashan in central Iran around 1528. The son of a cloth merchant, he soon gave up the family business to pursue a literary career, and he became the dominant Persian poet of the middle half of the sixteenth century. Hobbled by chronic foot pain, Muhtasham rarely left his native city, where he died in February 1588, but was well placed to respond to the major trends in religion, politics, and culture of his age. Muhtasham's court poetry articulates the authority and ideological values of the ruling Safavid dynasty during the heyday of the reign of Shah Tahmasb (r. 1524–1576). But the poet also participated in a dynamic literary scene outside the court. His occasional poetry reflects the architectural and human landscape of Kashan's cultural elite, and his lyric poetry participates in the world of amorous desire and intrigue among the high society of the lesser nobility, the bureaucratic class, and wealthy merchants. These selections from Muhtasham's collected works offer glimpses of his vivid poetic portrait of his life and age.

FIRST STANZA OF MUHTASHAM'S SEVEN-STROPHE (*HAFT-BAND*) ODE TO 'ALI IBN ABI TALIB

Although poetry written in praise of the Prophet's cousin, son-in-law, and the first Shi'ite imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, have a long history in Persian poetry, it took on a new importance after the emergence of the Safavids, for whom Shi'ism and

devotion to the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad was a central component of state ideology. According to a well-known anecdote, Shah Tahmasb rejected a panegyric poem that Muhtasham had written in his honor, instructing the poet to write instead in veneration of the imams. Muhtasham returned with his famous “Seven-Stanza Ode to ‘Ali” (the first stanza of which is translated here).¹ He was amply rewarded for his efforts and set a model for the expression of both religious devotion and commitment to the state.

Peace be upon the world of secrets,
 the lord of the worlds,
 heir to the Prophet’s knowledge,
 knight in the arena of faith.

Peace be upon you! Your court
 is a refuge for creation.
 The Holy Spirit sweeps
 your threshold with his sleeve.

Peace! Your body lies beneath the earth,
 a comfort to pilgrims,
 a buried treasure to purchase
 paradise for humankind.

Peace! The iron bulwark
 of your sword became
 a strong fortress surrounding
 the citadel of Islam.

Peace, o Deputy of the Prophet
 at the end of days,
 leader of the first
 and vanguard of the last.

Conquering king of Khaybar,² dragon destroyer,
 Imam of land and sea,
 Champion of truth, unconditional victor,
 Amir al-mu’minin—Commander of the Faithful.

King of the realm of faith,
 appointed by the Sultan of prophets,
 by the clear text of the Qur’an,
 the successor of the Chosen One.³

The forearm of your succor—
 the pillar of victory for the Messenger of God.
 The thread of your love—
 the firm rope for the people of God.

Whoever reads a chapter about you
 from the foundation of theology
 realizes instantly that you dwell
 in the place of the Chosen One.

Since your title became Bu Turab⁴—
 Father of the Soil—heaven's face
 is smudged with sorrow like an orphan's
 out of envy for the soil.

When the dog on your street
 sets foot on the ground,
 gazelles in China open wide
 their eyes watching its path.

Your pure light became the yeast
 in kneading Adam.
 How else did the mixture
 of water and clay take form?

He who put the ring of *God's hand*
 on your finger
 carved its bezel with the words
 *upon their hands.*⁵

Since you are the hand of God
 and the nephew of God's Messenger,
 the Lord gave you a place
 above everyone seated on high.

The hand of God,
 the nephew of God's Messenger—
 only one is not under his control—
 God's Messenger.

CHRONOGRAM ON THE COMING OF KING
HUMAYUN, RULER OF INDIA, AND SULTAN BAYAZID,
SON OF THE CEASAR OF THE OTTOMAN REALM,
TO THE FOOT OF THE MOST LOFTY THRONE OF
HIS FLOURISHING MAJESTY SULTAN KING TAHMASB,
DESCENDANT OF HUSAYN

On other occasions, Tahmasb welcomed Muhtasham's ability to celebrate his temporal power and position in global politics in verse. This poem utilizes a literary device for which Muhtasham was famous—the chronogram. The letters of the Perso-Arabic alphabet each carry a numerical value, and in the chronogram, the letter-values of a memorable phrase are added together to yield the year when an important event occurred, a rhetorical technique impossible to replicate in English. The chronograms in this poem provide the dates for two events that placed Tahmasb at the center of the Muslim political world in the sixteenth century. In 1544, the Mughal king Humayun was chased out of India and took refuge at the Safavid court; after Tahmasb equipped him with arms, advisers, and cash, Humayun returned to India to reestablish the Mughal dynasty, which would rule most of India until the eighteenth century. About sixteen years later, the rebellious Ottoman prince Bayazid ("the offspring of the ruler of Anatolia," Suleiman the Magnificent) also sought shelter with the Safavids. Bayazid, however, proved to be a troublesome guest, and he and his retinue were eventually killed, no doubt helping to assure diplomatic peace between the Safavids and Ottomans. Though the two events did not coincide, Muhtasham brings them together by including the same act of submission, kissing the feet, in both chronograms.⁶

When Fortune raised its head to the zenith
of victory and conquest, and safety
and security unveiled their faces,
the blessed king, firm on the throne of joy,
Darius on the sun-throne in heaven's court,⁷
who pacifies discords at the end time,
and washes the dust of revolution
from the face of victory—Tahmasb Khan,
the refuge of the world, the royal king,
guiding the compass at the center point
of the cosmos, an Abu Turab present here—
there came to him from one direction
the imperial eagle of Humayun,
who sought his temporal desires
by kissing his stirrup and was triumphant.

From the other direction, the offspring
of the king of Anatolia rubbed
his head against the clouds by kissing his foot.

I sought from Reason the first year
of this convergence, and it said,
“The seeker of worldly desire
kissed the king’s stirrup.” (= 951/1544).

When I asked for the date
of its conjunct, it said,
“A foreign moon arrived
to kiss the foot of the sun.” (= 967/1559–60)

PANEGYRIC TO PARI KHAN KHANUM

Muhtasham’s primary patron in the Safavid royal family, however, was not Shah Tahmasb, but his daughter, the cultured and powerful Pari Khan Khanum. This praise poem records a central event in Muhtasham’s literary career.⁸ The “sealed decree” delivered by the messenger was probably an edict that gave Muhtasham the power to review and approve of all poems submitted to the royal court, making him in effect the official arbiter of literary production and patronage of the imperial court.

A messenger came last night to the humble home
of this feeble man. His arrival brought my soul
great glad tidings. His courtesy indicated good news,
filling the heart with promises of eternal joy.
The smell of ambergris spread all around him
and wafted on the breezes to gardens far and wide.
In his dulcet phrases, my heart tasted honey,
a taste sweeter to my soul than words can say.
The dust from his journey was like a soothing balm,
giving comfort and ease to my sleepless eyes.
In exchange for his words, which rang loud in my ears,
I made my boundless thanks resound throughout the world.

What words were those? He said: “Come now, rouse yourself
from sorrow’s company. The arrows of your prayers
have hit their target. Throw off the rags of grief.
A special honor comes to you from the sun
dwelling in heaven, the prosperous Queen Bilqis,⁹

Pari Khan, whose command extends to the fourth throne
 of heaven. Worshipped on land and sea, her threshold
 is worn smooth so often have khans and sultans
 politely touched their heads down upon it. Last night,
 a thousand kings of royal demeanor came to touch
 the saddle cover of the least rider in her retinue.
 A thousand angels sent from heaven came to bow
 down their heads at the furthest barrier of her court.
 When she musters her army, its width and breadth
 reach from one horizon to the other like sunlight.
 Where she spreads the table of bounty, its blessings
 reach one and all like God's universal sustenance.
 For anyone whom she aids, a mirage gushes up
 with springs of living waters, rushing like gales.
 At the feet of anyone whom she wishes well,
 the riches of oceans and mines surge like floods.
 Which sea gave rise to the cloudbanks of her gifts?
 The effects of their bounty traversed both space and time.
 Which gardens gave nurture to her lofty date palm?
 Its life-bestowing fruits come to young and old."

Among her gifts, he brought along a sealed decree.
 A scrip for the Provider's bounty came to me
 redeemable anywhere. Her chain of justice
 was linked to the horizons, so all eyes can behold
 the equity of Anushirvan.¹⁰ When her justice crushed
 oppression under foot, wolves bowed to shepherd's feet.
 Now that her governance has humbled cruelty,
 guard dogs inflict thieves with multiple wounds.
 When she asks those informed directions to the house
 of her enemy, sudden death always comes calling.
 Unknowing, like fate, each arrow from disaster's bow
 directed itself, certain and sure, to her foes.

O king of kings, if I set forth with due dignity
 the things that enemies have done to feeble me,
 and how when the gift warrant and robe of honor
 arrived from that sunbeam torch, the moon's guardian,
 and how that flood of sorrow rushing after me
 has passed over me and has swamped my enemies,
 her Excellence will be more happy for her kindness
 than one could ever reach the end of reckoning.

Perhaps inspiration came from the All-Knowing
 King in heaven to your most august mind and said:
 “O Princess, take note of broken-hearted Muhtasham,
 driven to despair by his enemies’ malice,
 so ample sustenance comes to him morning and night
 from heaven’s round table by the Provider’s decree.”
 May your bounteous table be spread, for in this world,
 its largesse reaches oppressed and destitute multitudes.

IN PRAISE OF THE GREATEST AMIR YUSUF
 BAYK IBN MUHAMMAD KHAN AND ONE
 OF HIS SECLUDED LADIES

After the death of Tahmasb in 1576, a prolonged and violent struggle erupted among his children and the tribal leaders who had supported his rule. Attempting to keep afloat on these shifting political currents, Muhtasham wrote poems in honor of all the major contenders for power as their fortunes ebbed and flowed. This poem celebrates the marriage of Yusuf Bayk, who was charged with defending the Turkmen tribe’s base of power in Kashan, and the daughter of another tribal leader, Amir Khan.¹¹ The poem begins by identifying Kashan with Egypt, which naturally welcomes the arrival of its savior, Joseph/Yusuf. The grandiose praise for this relatively insignificant figure resounds with the aging poet’s desperate plea for stability, a futile hope as Yusuf Bayk was killed by a musket ball fired by his own men shortly after this poem was written. By the end of the poem, Muhtasham can rely only on his own literary craftsmanship.

Such did Kashan—Egypt on the face of the earth—
 desire in the friendship of a Joseph such as this:

namely, the lamp of the eye, the mighty amir,
 the sun on earth, lighting up the moon in the sky,
 namely, the chosen deputy of the renowned king,
 a successful Darius, the Turkmen’s leader and head,
 namely, the resident in the court of rulership,
 whose place is beyond the view of the placeless,
 the new risen sun, the prosperous seizer of worlds,
 the new Jamshid, successful in youthful fortune,
 quick rider in the arena of state, whose onrush
 snatches heaven’s golden orb with its mallet,¹²
 hunter of beasts in thickets of fury, whose fearsomeness
 drains the life from the bodies of a thousand lions—

When that amir tests his sword, instantly
 the plains are filled with severed heads.
 A hint of the eyebrow, the bow in his hand,
 throws troops of riders from their saddles to the dust.

When haughty winds leave the tyrant's head,
 the belligerent wolf bows down to the shepherd.

When he wishes to transform the state of bodies,
 mountains are light-weight, and straw grows heavy.
 When he seeks to change the form of the planets,
 the sun appears moon-like, and the moon like the sun.
 If he launches across the heavens on horseback,
 the heads of stars are in debt to his horse's hooves.
 Day and night, sun and moon are in the vanguard
 around his court like enslaved guards.
 Upright men who bow at his threshold lord
 it over the heavens in their pride and pomp.
 The phoenix of his ambition has its nest
 atop the ninth heaven, making the world look small.

When he dips his hand into the purse of largesse
 to scatter gold, beggars' skirts stretch as wide as their sleeves.
 The garden of his generosity, a spring without autumn,
 yields such fruit that the eye of greed is sated.
 If the sea of his bounty begins to seethe,
 it casts up worlds of kingly pearls on the shore.

Since being without a partner, unique and single, is
 reserved for the Unique One, adored by man and jinn,
 youthful Bilqis came out from the veil of the sultanate
 for the sake of that praiseworthy Solomon.

No, not Bilqis, but Khadija,¹³ veiled by the sun,
 a hint of the angels who reside in heaven,
 the concealed and chaste, whom the Veiler¹⁴
 has hidden from the world behind seven veils,
 light of the world, the plaque above the portico of rule,
 the daughter of the great family of Amir Khan,
 No purity is greater than hers except for
 the chaste Sayyida at the end of time.

In short, when those two new moons
 of happy ascent found in each other
 a homogeneous conjunction,
 on the page of imagination —
 may it be preserved from decay —
 the genius of the historian,
 with the aid of rhetoric's pen,
 incited this kingly, flowing couplet
 each line of which gives
 the date of this conjugal union:

“They were united in soul like two moons as one, (=993/1585)
 prosperous Bilqis and successful Solomon.” (=993/1585)

Your genius, Muhtasham,
 while knotting these verses,
 uttered this chronogram couplet,
 after settling the rhyme
 and the meter's demands,
 for these two make one world
 after this date. Now say:
 “Boast of magic — one can claim,
 a miracle in your age
 with these remote ideas.”

TWO CHRONOGRAMS ON THE DEATH OF AN ENEMY AND THE DEATH OF A FRIEND

Aside from his engagement with major and minor political figures, Muhtasham played a prominent public role in the broader cultural life of Kashan, the literary and cultural center of sixteenth-century Iran. His high status, privilege, and talent assured that he would have both friends and detractors, and chronograms on the deaths of two of them testify to the deep affection and animus that characterized relationships in this often cutthroat artistic world.¹⁵

Chronogram on the Death of the Poet Maqsud When He Was Murdered in Yazd

Despicable dog,
 the lowly and mean Maqsud,
 an enemy of religion,

whom the sole God
 created out of spite,
 a piece of shit
 more putrid than dog shit,
 like a dog ate a corpse
 and out he shat.

What a blessed night was the night
 when his murderer ripped out his guts
 with the point of a dagger.
 Hell's landlord grabbed his collar
 and dragged him across Hades' plaza.

Wisdom knocked on thought's door
 and brought to mind two splendid chronograms
 in these two lines:
 "He kept the soil of Hell soiled." (= 987/1579)
 "Even shit was stained by his foul spirit." (= 987/1579)

*Chronogram on the Death of the Unique One of the Age,
 Sheltering in God's Mercy and Forgiveness,
 the Calligrapher Mir Mu'izz al-Din*

O Heaven, so hostile,
 so faithless, o heart of stone!
 His friends' affairs in shambles:
 Where is the finest among them?

Where is the renowned amir,
 Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad,
 who conquered the world the way
 sunlight embraces the earth?

Where are the magical motions
 of those fingers? The beauty
 of his calligraphy once plundered
 his friends' tranquil hearts.

Do you demand I show fortitude
 in the face of this hardship?
 No, this is cause for lamentation,
 no place for etiquette.

For dignity's sake,
 I sometimes resolve
 to be less edgy and restless,
 but what can ease the heart?

I expect he will come to me later
 from time to time in dreams,
 but how will my eyes sleep
 for tears mourning him?

Since this treasure of beauty
 now adorns paradise,
 this cry falls over land and sea:
 "Where is that peerless pearl?"

When the scribe of spirits asked me
 for his chronogram, I said,
 "Where is the model calligrapher?" (= 990/1582)
 for that is who he was.

POEMS ON ARCHITECTURE

As the preceding poem on the death of a calligrapher indicates, Muhtasham was engaged in many art forms beyond poetry, architecture in particular. Not unlike poems, public buildings, fountains, and homes are products of careful design and craftsmanship, and a poem could be recited in the setting of the structure described or inscribed on its surface.¹⁶ In the second of these poems, the house with its red entryway "speaks" for itself as a loving and yearning host welcoming its beloved guest, and personification melds the architectural structure with its human creators and inhabitants.¹⁷

Quatrains on a Fountain

- (1) Such water! Khizr¹⁸ asked it for immortality
 and the envious water of life receded.
 This water does not rise up from the force
 of the fountain. It stands tall to honor you.
- (2) The waters of Zamzam sink into the ground,
 embarrassed by this effulgent font of Kawsar.¹⁹
 Is it strange if it bubbles up from the basin?
 The fiery reflection of your face makes it boil.

- (5) The designer who laid this building out
 has integrated various crafts as one.
 He has sown a magical garden, it seems,
 where shoots of plants sprout up from the water.
- (6) This water rising upward like a flame
 and clinging to the winds' skirts in desire
 is like Muhtasham's tears that bubble up
 from the heart's fire and gush out from within.

Ghazal for Inscription on a House

Awaiting a dear friend,
 my eye sockets are a portico
 painted red with tears.

My dear treasury
 of loveliness,
 why dwell so long
 in another's heart?
 Come. I, too,
 have a treasure
 buried in the ruins.
 Come to the tulip bed
 of my scarred heart.
 Time cannot recall
 such a garden of roses.
 Would it be so awful
 if a sultan just once
 reposed free of pomp
 in a beggar's abode?

My king, by my life
 (or what's left of it),
 is it any wonder
 a host is ashamed
 before someone like you?
 The party that you perfume
 with the dust
 from your clothes
 needs no burning incense.

Enter, my dear,
 come on inside.
 Without you, Muhtasham
 is like a lifeless body
 or a painting on the wall.

SELECTION FROM *THE LOVER'S CONFECTION* (NUQL-I 'USHSHAQ)

The homes and streets of sixteenth-century Iranian cities were the setting for a refined cult of amorous desire. The pursuit of the love of both women and young men developed into an elaborate mode of behavior that was part social display and part erotic obsession. The lyric ghazal was a crucial instrument in this play of passion. In *The Lover's Confection*, Muhtasham embeds thirty-eight ghazals in a prose narrative that gives a fictionalized autobiographical account of his purported love affair with a high-class courtesan.²⁰ In the following selection from near the end of the work, the poet-narrator is working to repair a rift in their relationship caused by a rash and angry poem he had sent to his beloved earlier. A concerned go-between judges her reaction to both this poem and a poem of apology Muhtasham wrote immediately afterward and advises the narrator on his next move in this delicate amorous negotiation, which he executes in the concluding poem.

Translation

That courier, the sympathetic go-between who had diligently undertaken from the first to forge the chain of affection between that beauty and me, was by chance present when she read those two ghazals. By the power of his long-standing intimacy, he ascertained every detail of her changing moods and attitudes toward me, a heart-sick prisoner of love, toward those disreputable, frivolous pretenders, and toward those occupied with their own self-interests, who were ignorant of the motives of a temptress busily working to stir up her suitor's jealousy and whose filthy minds and shriveled souls that sultan of loveliness considered to be stones or inert clods, keeping herself strictly secluded from such fawning beggars due to the contempt and disrepute they had in her eyes. Then, that very night, he sped over to my humble residence out of his compassion for the miserable, and after describing the circumstances with fabulous, spellbinding words, he boldly ventured to offer this advice: "Although you burst like a rue seed on the fire of anxiety and are prone to burn down the ruined remains of your own prosperity, take heed henceforth to sit silent and still and to pull back completely from talking wildly and irritating the one you love, for as soon as the sensitive nose of that musky gazelle caught a whiff of the conciliatory breeze that wafted from your last ghazal, she left estrangement and bickering a thousand miles behind because of her natural forbearance, delicately

appreciative of acts of kindness, for it is her innate character to overlook faults and forgive sins.”

So, I exerted myself to the utmost in seeking to make that mood fully manifest and to explicate perfectly those astonishing mysteries. I opened the lids on many a private jewel box, each worth more than myriad precious pearls,²¹ to give voice at each moment to her kind soul that was fully aware of my intimate affairs. In composing this ghazal, suitable to the taste of those sweet lips, I strove to array the instruments of peace, and I multiplied yearning by yearning breath by breath and solicitude by solicitude moment by moment:

Why don't you string me along
with your lovers anymore
or destroy my life with your jokes?

Why don't you light the fire of love
that you first kindled in my heart
and make me smolder deep inside?

To drive me crazy, why don't you
set aside your innocence
and inflict endless disgrace on me?

Why not take up beauty's ways again
and bring home all my gathered wares,
more loving than at any time?

Why don't you call me your cur
anymore and bring me panting to kiss
the feet of the dog at your door?

I will cling to your skirts again,
if I'm sure you won't be quick
to notice every stain I leave on them.

I will be, like Muhtasham, a dog
on your street, if I now you won't bring
screaming rivals down around my ears again.

THREE LOVE POEMS (GHAZALS)

Muhtasham's free-standing ghazals often present single encounters between lovers, crucial moments in a drama of illicit romance and seduction. In the first two

poems, the speaker engages not only with his beloved but indirectly with his rival (“the other,” “that someone else”), as well as with onlookers and gossips from whom the affair should be kept decorously concealed. The third ghazal presents a rare moment of union and fulfillment, poised in a dream world between fantasy and reality.²²

Ghazal 72

They let something you said slip out clearly
last night. Your hidden anger, praise God, is now
out in the open. Throughout history, lovers
used to hide their murders. In your age
at last, this secret custom has
gone public.

You’ve flung the veil far aside. Craving wine
your words tonight ring clearly in my ears.
Drunk last night, you explained clearly every
word of those notes that your heart kept hidden.
One who kept your route to the mosque secret
last night revealed your path to the tavern
in public.

The other’s enmity even toward you
was made plain today so often did he swear
falsely (but clearly) on your very life.
By innuendo you spoke of someone’s sins.
By your eloquence, Muhtasham’s sin was
made public.

Ghazal 199

I kept my eyes so fixed tonight
on his flirtatious eyes
that I kept him from looking
at someone else. That someone else
was just grazed by an arrow
of feigned indifference from his bow,
so closely did I keep my watch
on his caressing gaze. Sidelong
I kept the corner of one eye
trained on his half-coquettish look

so he couldn't glance at my rival
half-meaning to lead him on.

With all these furtive signs
to keep my rivals at bay,
my secret was revealed.
He relieved me of the need
to flirt with other darlings,
and I kept him from needing
to need anyone else.
Behold my day of love:
that cavalier galloped by,
and I pulled on passion's
lasso and held him back.

Mohtasham was only toying
with his fantasy, but my fingers
were working the chains
of his flowing tresses.

Ghazal 209

The night I dreamt of the silver limbs
of that cypress, I watched my own body
quiver clearly like quicksilver.

In the dark of that night,
I saw flames of moonglow
stream out through the window
from the bright moon of her face.

I could not see her diaphanous body,
but I watched her face in the mirror
like an autumn leaf on the water.

The light of the eyes of the wakeful—
what a shining star she was!
Beside her I saw the moon shine
to be lusterless and dull.

Truly, her precious body
was the water of life-giving moisture
to the garden of the spirit.

As her silvery body
undulated in my embrace,
I saw the flanks of my torso
fill with pure silver.

Don't lift the lid on the jewel box
of poetry, Mohtasham, more than this.
No one dares say what I saw in my dream.

FOUR STANZAS FROM AN ELEGY ON
THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER,
KHVAJAH 'ABD AL-GHANI

Muhtasham was a prominent public figure whose poetry deeply engaged in all aspects of the social life of his age, but one of his most famous poems was written in response to a profoundly personal event. Safavid Iran and Mughal India were closely linked commercially, politically, and culturally, and many Iranian emigrants took advantage of the opportunities that the wealth of India offered. Muhtasham's younger brother, 'Abd al-Ghani, was less fortunate. Probably traveling on family business, he died unexpectedly in India far from home. Muhtasham's strophic elegy (of which the first and last three stanzas are translated here)²³ expresses the poet's profound sorrow and sense of loss over the death of a brother and the death of part of himself.

Stanza 1

Cruel and unjust, bellicose heavens!
Alas for the malice of the hypocrite spheres!

You made me drink the chalice of injustice
to remind me of death until doomsday.

You made me listen to words of cruelty
to forget forever words to my good health.

I writhe between the fire and the flood.
Where is the gale of death
to carry off the dust of my mortal clay?

Is there no kind friend to destroy me?
No companion to help in my demise?

Is there no messenger to bring greetings
 from my heart, a broken-wing bird,
 to the palm tree that grows in paradise?

My head be your sacrifice,
 O morning breeze! Arise and go
 to the world of spirits from this ruined abode.

Seek a sign of my lost one among the noble and the wise.
 Track down my Joseph among the slaves and the free.

When you come to that place
 where chaste youths walk proud,
 dismount from the steed of resolve
 and set up a lamentation.

When you catch a glimpse of my 'Abd al-Ghani,
 deliver from my tongue a cry of pain:

“O light of your brother’s eye,
 he sends you this message:
 ‘Your death has forbidden me life.’”

Stanza 8

Is any part of my body left unscarred by grief?
 Any part my heart left unwounded by your absence?

Are the rivers of my tears not in full flood?
 Do houses not burn like furnaces from my sighs?

Are not the clothes of my life rent in despair
 like a tulip’s petals from collar to hem?

Do the beams of sun or moon light up my eyes
 when they are dark without the glow of your face?

What pleasure do I get from the melody
 of song, harp, or lute,
 when my only songs are dirges and threnodies?

The wings of my joy are so broken
 that it will have no perch but nests of sadness.

Like the sea, I beat my own head over a lost pearl,
a jewel to be found in no quarry or mine.

I cry like a nightingale: in my meadow, a rose
that grows nowhere else
has blown away on the wind.

Seek out his equal in my soul,
for his only chronogram is this:
“The brother who equals my life.” (= 959/1552)

Those brothers know my state
whose lives commune together in love.

Stanza 9

In your absence, O brother,
what should I do in this world?
What make of my heart?
What should I do with my feeble soul?

Like a bow, my body is bent by the weight of grief,
but there's no fighting the arched heavens.
What should I do?

With patience, one might bear the burden of absence,
but your absence is too heavy a load.
What should I do?

The night of your absence
burned me to the bone, and still
it will not leave the marrow.
What should I do?

I live, and death does not take life from me.
I'm stuck in this business. By my life,
what should I do?

Searching for you, my soul is slipping
from my lips, and no one
can direct me to the road to oblivion.
What should I do?

The heavens cover their ears from my sad lament,
and still death won't seal my lips.

What should I do?

Friends who speak my language come,
but what should I do
with those who speak my language
when I have nothing to say?

It's better for Muhtasham to die than to live,
but death keeps holding back.

What should I do?

Grieving for you, my sea of tears has no shore
I flounder in this boundless sea.

What should I do?

If my body is not extinguished like a candle
in this storm of tears, it is right to kill me.

Stanza 11

May you sit in the shade of Tuba and Sidrah.²⁴

May the tidings of the verse

Beatitude is theirs be yours.²⁵

As long as the limpid waters of God's mercy
flow in paradise,
may your limpid spirit dwell in highest heaven.

Though you gave your brother over
to the clutches of sorrow,
may your heart, dear brother, be free of grief.

Though you lit in me
 fires of alienation,
 may your soul swim in the sea of God's mercy.

Though you have left me to burn
in the scorching sun of sorrow,
in the shade of Muhammad's green banner,
may your soul rest.

10. Anushirvan is another pre-Islamic king of Persia, known especially for his fairness and equity. A chain hung outside his palace that any passer-by could pull to demand justice from the king.
11. Persian text: Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*, 1:570–71.
12. This line is based on the game of polo, a common pastime among the military-political elite.
13. Muhtasham here replaces the pre-Islamic figure of Queen Bilqis with Khadija, the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, as an archetypal model for Yusuf Bayg's wife.
14. The Veiler is one of the attributes of God.
15. Persian text for both chronograms is from Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*, 2:1531–32 and 2:1588–89.
16. Persian text for "Quatrains on a Fountain," is from Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*, 1:820–21.
17. Persian text for "Ghazal for Inscription on a House," is from Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*, 1:799–800.
18. Khizr is a legendary figure who attained immortality after drinking from the water of life.
19. Zamzam is the sacred well located in the sacred precinct, here "embarrassed" by the water in the fountain, which is likened to Kawsar, the river that runs through paradise.
20. Persian text: Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*, 2:1454–55.
21. Pearls are a common metaphor for lines of verse, and the jewel box here is the poet's poetic genius.
22. Persian text for all three poems is from Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*: Ghazal 72, 2:923; Ghazal 199, 2:1024; Ghazal 209, 2:1031–32.
23. Persian text: Muhtasham, *Haft Divan*, 1:626–36.
24. Tuba and Sidra are the names of two trees growing in paradise.
25. The italicized phrase comes from Qur'an 13:29: "Those who believe and do good works, beatitude is theirs and a beautiful homecoming."
26. "Karbala's martyrs" refers to 'Ali's son Husayn, whose martyrdom at Karbala is the foundational event in Shi'ite history, and his supporters.
27. 'Ali ibn Musa al-Riza is the eighth Shi'ite imam whose shrine is a major Shi'ite pilgrimage site in the city of Mashhad.

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II. The Poet ‘Azmizade Haleti and the Transformation of Ottoman Literature in the Seventeenth Century

BERAT AÇIL

Conventional scholars have described the Ottoman Empire as being in a long period of gradual decline in the last decades of the sixteenth century. But a new generation of revisionist scholars have challenged this view and describe this time as the beginning of a long period of imperial crisis and change. According to these scholars, from the 1580s onward, the Ottomans witnessed a series of transformative problems that not only created changes in their full-fledged empire’s political, military, and economic structures but also in various areas of social and cultural life. Based on this new perspective and on the so-called seventeenth-century Ottoman imperial crisis, this essay discusses some hitherto unexplored developments in the field of Ottoman literature. Focusing on the life and work of seventeenth-century Ottoman poet and scholar ‘Azmizade Haleti Efendi (d. 1570–1631), a study of his writings demonstrates the transformation that was taking place within Ottoman society in the late 1500s.

CHANGE(S) IN POWER RELATIONS AND THE RISE OF HAREM EUNUCHS

The Ottomans had a well-established patrimonial system that governed almost all managerial activities until the mid-sixteenth century. This system reached its level of perfection in the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), described as a time in which “one did not need to wonder about who was going to be the next

grand vizier.”¹ This kind of a world encouraged an easy-going lifestyle in many ways as one would be able to easily predict his or her near future. Baki Tezcan refers to the subsequent era in which transformative structural changes took place as “the Second Empire.”

[M]y suggestion [is] to call the period of circa 1580–1826 the Second Empire. If the political structures of the feudal kingdom and the patrimonial empire were to be represented by a pyramid at the apex of which stood the sultan, the Second Empire would best be symbolized by a spider web with the monarch at the center but not on top of anyone else.²

He continues by suggesting that “the Second Empire as a whole is marked by the gradual demilitarization of the upper ruling class, or its *civilization*—civil in the sense of being nonmilitary.”³

Indeed, from the reign of Murad III (r. 1574–1595) onward, the Ottomans went through a period of change pertaining to court and dynastic politics, which in turn had critical repercussions on the intellectual and literary life of many parties. For instance, when the Ottoman dynasty stopped sending their princes to *sanjaks* (mostly in Anatolia) with the aim at training them in statecraft, all main political and cultural patronage networks shifted to the capital city of Istanbul, and a new center of power and patronage emerged together with a new Ottoman ruling class. Naturally a prince ascending the throne would bring many of his favorites to Istanbul. Politically speaking, the abandonment of sanjaks resulted in power relations being centered at the Topkapı Palace. When a new sultan came to the throne, he brought his favorites with him to the palace, which set them on a collision course with the old power holders.⁴ Hence factions emerged in the palace that sought to be closer to the sultan at the expense of other parties.

Two parties appeared to have benefited from these emerging new conditions: *valide* sultans⁵ (sultanas) and *darussaade agası* (chief eunuch of the imperial harem of the Ottoman Empire). Jane Hathaway confirmed this observation, pointing to the power vacuum being filled by the sultan’s mother and the Chief Harem Eunuch. The *valide* sultans are well documented in various academic and non-academic works, but the effects of the Chief Harem Eunuch on Ottoman culture require some additional explanation. Hathaway describes this as a time of crisis in the empire and suggests that the inauguration of the office of the Eunuch was a reaction or adaptation to that crisis.

What is intriguing about the office of Chief Harem Eunuch is that it emerged and developed during the era of what used to be called “decline,” which has now been recast as a period, beginning in the late sixteenth century and running through the seventeenth century, when the Ottoman Empire passed through a profound crisis to which it was forced to adapt. Where the palace was concerned, this crisis affected the manner in which the Ottoman dynasty reproduced itself and projected its authority. The evolution of the Chief Harem Eunuch’s office is, I would argue, an integral part of the palace’s adaptation to the crisis.⁶

This dramatic change had an immediate influence on the patronage system of the empire.

Although some recently published works address patronage, significant ground remains to be covered. Hatice Aynur writes: "In spite of the importance of patronage in the Ottoman world, no encompassing study of this institution does as yet exist. High Ottoman officials and also the sultans themselves, many of whom wrote poetry, acted as protectors of poets. Both people born in Istanbul and newcomers from the provinces were on the lookout for patrons."⁷ After Murad III, the characteristics of both the sultan and the Eunuch were transformed. Tezcan argues that Murad III was trying to destabilize the status of the grand vizier while beginning to establish an alternative and stable power that had its center within the palace. For that purpose, he empowered the Eunuch and made him the most important administrator in the palace and strengthened his position even further by attaching to it financial resources of the empire. Tezcan continues by arguing that Murad III was trying to reduce the power of vizier families and the people of justice elite for the sake of establishing an empire ruled from the palace strictly administrated by people such as the Chief Eunuch Mehmed Aga (d. 1590) whom he fully trusted.⁸

To understand the power the Eunuch gained in the empire, it is important to note that it was Eunuch Mustafa Aga who had enthroned Osman II (r. 1618–1622).⁹ Mustafa Aga (d. 1624) and his predecessors were powerful in the patronage system as well. The first Harem Eunuch, Habeşi Mehmed Aga (d. 1590), was the most effective and powerful patron of the arts in the empire in his time,¹⁰ and those that followed began to select poets and other artisans and bring them under their protection. Meddah Medhi (d. after 1620) was one of those poets; he was not actually a poet but rather a public storyteller (*meddah*) and was sponsored by the Eunuch himself.¹¹

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

There were many transformative changes in the seventeenth century; among them, if not the most important one, was the regicide of Osman II, a traumatic moment in Ottoman history that had different levels of impact in varied areas. The symbolic meaning of that regicide revealed the weakness of the sultan in the now changed or transformed empire. "When analyzed through the perspective provided by Ottoman intellectual traditions of governance, it is possible to see that the regicide of Osman II and other depositions of the seventeenth century broke the ties that held together ethics, economics, and politics and thus brought limitations to the power of the sultan."¹²

These changes brought about changes in the main characteristics of Ottoman literature in general, and especially poetry, in the seventeenth century.¹³ Aynur states that "from the seventeenth century onwards many writers show a tendency to refer

to the environments in which they themselves lived,” and therefore it can be said that “poetry in Turkish acquired a local flavour.”¹⁴ Aynur’s argument seems to provide an answer to the age-old bias that Ottoman literature is abstract and has nothing to do with society and nature. Aynur continues to point out evidence of daily life in Ottoman literature by asserting that “*divans* of the seventeenth and following centuries tended to contain more references to daily life than had been true in earlier periods. From the collected poems of Nabi [d. 1712] it is possible to compile his biography, while Cevri [d. 1654] was the first to mention the palace women by their names, particularly the ruler’s powerful mother, Kosem Sultan (d. 1651).”¹⁵

Another important feature of the seventeenth century was the diversification of inscriptions. Art, poetry, and architecture converged in that era and almost every building or other construction contained some embedded poetry.¹⁶ These poems generally consisted of a chronogram commemorating the date of the construction of the building, palace, mosque, *medrese*, bridge, and so on.

Stone and marble occupied a special place. From the seventeenth century onwards, inscriptions, which in earlier times had simply recorded the person or persons responsible for the construction and the date at which a given mosque, school or fountain was completed, often came to consist of several couplets. In these verses the functions of the relevant building were spelt out in some detail. For a prominent structure, several poets might compose such verses; but only one of them, usually either from the ruling circles or at least close to the powers that be, was honoured by having his work thus immortalized. Even public competitions for such purposes were on record.¹⁷

Kasides also increased in both number and importance. “This type of poem gained in popularity in the course of the seventeenth century, and the large number of *kasides* composed in praise of important people may indicate that relations between authors and members of the ruling group became closer in this period.”¹⁸ The popularity of both the inscriptions and the *kasides* attest to the fact that both laypeople and members of the ruling class wanted to record things that they deemed significant.

In addition to biographical dictionaries, which provided brief information about both the poets’ lives and their poems, a new genre called *vefeyat* gained popularity. “Beginning with the seventeenth century, the biographical dictionaries tell us that some poets and prose writers produced works that they called *vefeyat*. These volumes contain the death dates of the people treated, and that is why they are referred to by a term derived from the word for death (*vefat*); otherwise, the books in question are short biographical dictionaries.”¹⁹

Ottomans were constantly attempting new things in this era; so much so that Cemal Kafadar described this period as “the age of *chelebis*.”²⁰ The *chelebis* in this context could be marked by their curiosity. The pioneering figure among them is Evliya Chelebi (d. after 1682). His stunning masterpiece, *Seyahatname* (The Book of Travels), is one of the most analyzed of all Ottoman texts, and it contains

descriptions of almost everything about the early modern Ottomans and also the Europeans: customs, mosques, bridges, inscriptions, quarters, populations, geographical elements of a given territory, and so forth. It can easily be argued that all academic disciplines treat *Seyahatname* as the main source for their subject area because Evliya's curiosity encompassed all knowable aspects of society.²¹

The literary, architectural, and artistic accumulation is another distinguishing characteristic of the seventeenth century. *Hikemi* style poems (poems about wisdom and philosophy) of the seventeenth century, especially those written by Nabi, as I argue, are evidence of the accumulation in poetry.

In understanding an age of change, it is important to recognize the foresighted poets because they were keen observers of society. 'Azmiade Haleti was one of the most insightful poets of that time, and his work reflected the transformations taking place within Ottoman literature. I begin with a brief survey of the life and the works of Haleti, paying special attention to his *Divan*. Then some excerpts of his *Divan* are presented, which offer a taste of the different genres of his transformative poems.

'AZMIZADE HALETI, HIS LIFE AND WORK

'Azmiade Haleti (b. 1570) was one of the most famous poets and scholars of his time.²² He was born in Istanbul and was a member of a renowned family; many of his relatives were both high-rank government officials and poets. Among them were his father, 'Azmi (d. 1582), the well-known tutor of princes and also a poet, who began to write his *Mihr u Musteri* (a translation from Persian poet Assar-ı Tebrizi [d. 1383]) but was unable to complete it. Haleti's grandfather, worked as the head of the financial department (*defterdar*), and a famous uncle, Nisancı Mehmed Nami Pasa —known by his penname Nami (d. 1595)—was both a poet and a very high-ranking official. He was also the father-in-law of Haleti.

As a member of this esteemed family, Haleti had acquired an excellent education through the *medrese* (Islamic school attached to a mosque). His master (*hodja*) was Hoca Sadeddin Efendi (d. 1599) who was also the imperial teacher to the Ottoman sultans. Haleti became a *muderris* (the teacher of the medrese) at the young age of twenty-one. Haleti was appointed to several high-ranking official posts over time. He first became a *muderris* in 1588–1589. His first judgeship (*kadılık*) was that of *Sam* (Damascus) in 1602. Then he became the judge (*kadı*) of *Kahire* (Cairo) and was the district governor (*kaymakam*) of Egypt for a short time. After waiting for a new office for two years, he was appointed as the judge of *Bursa*, but he was dismissed due to the lack of public order in the city. He became the judge of *Edirne* in 1611 but was dismissed after a short time and given the judgeship (*kadılık*) of *Sam*. He became the judge of Istanbul in 1614, the judge of *Kahire* in 1618, and the judge of *Uzunca-Ova* in 1621. He became the Anadolu military judge (*kazasker*) in 1623 and the Rumeli military judge in 1627. Each of these office was held for only a short period of time.

As one of the most renowned scholars of his age, Haleti had a fairly large library of his own containing about 4,000 books and one hundred miscellaneous items (*mecmu'a*).²³ Haleti read them all, took notes on the marginalias, and even redacted them when necessary. Looking at his poems, one may describe him as a scholar rather than a mystical poet as there is little reference to mysticism in his poems. His strength resides in his poetic power in stanzas, which defined him as a scholar-poet.

Haleti was from Istanbul and may be called an *Istanbulid* (Istanbulu), which constitutes a specific category in classical Turkish poetry. Some other members were Necati (d. 1509), Baki (d. 1600), and Nedim (d. 1730). The main characteristic of poets falling under this category is their use of simple and local language. Haleti also used rather simple language and attached importance to his Istanbulid roots, writing an ode to praise Abu Ayyub Ansari (d. 672 or 674), whose tomb is in Istanbul today.

Haleti has written many important works that can be divided into two categories: scholarly and poetic works. His scholarly works include *Hasiye 'ala Durer al-Hukkam* (marginal notes on *Durer al-Hukkam*), *Hasiye 'ala Serh al-Menar* (marginal notes on *Serh al-Menar*), and *Mugni al-Lebib*. These are very difficult texts to read, understand, and explain in the *medrese* curriculum, so one can speculate as to the high level of his scholarship. I personally agree with the scholar-poet adjective attributed to him. His poetic/literary works include the following:

1. *Hasiye 'ala Mihr u Musteri* (marginal notes on *Mihr [Moon] and Musteri [Jupiter]*), which was originally written by the Persian poet Assar. Haleti's father had started to translate it, but the text remained unfinished. Haleti wanted to continue this work, but he was not able to finish it either.
2. *Munseat* (Epistles) consists of epistles Haleti addressed to prominent scholars and statesmen of his age.
3. *Saki-name* (The Book of the Cupbearer) is a work about wine, the cupbearer, the beloved, love, and the rules of good manners related to drinking.
4. *Ruba'iyyat* (Stanzas) were a part of his *Divan*, but thanks to their quality they were also compiled as a distinct work of 1,000 stanzas. Haleti is the first poet that comes to mind when discussing Turkish stanzas because of both the number of stanzas he wrote and their quality. Haleti is generally called the "Hayyam-ı Rum" (Hayyam of Anatolia) because his reputation is similar to that of Hayyam (d. 1131).²⁴ Thirty-one copies of his stanzas reside in different manuscript libraries.
5. *Divan* (compilation of all poetic genres except the *mathnawis*) is one of the most copied works in the history of classical Turkish poetry (twenty-eight manuscript copies). According to Kaya, there are 1,712 different poems in the *Divan*.

Next, I introduce some poetry from Haleti's *Divan* to show the transformative and novel characteristics of Haleti's poems. An explanation of the properties of each poem is provided before the translation to contextualize it in terms of both history and literature.

TRANSLATIONS AND NOTES FOR EXCERPTS FROM HALETI'S *DIVAN*

ON THE PORTRAITURE OF ABU AYYUB ANSARI
MAY GOD BE PLEASED WITH HIM

This poem was chosen because of its uniqueness. Abu Ayyub Ansari had hosted Prophet Muhammed (d. 632) in his home after the Prophet's *hijra* (emigration) from Makkah to Madina, and then he became one of the Prophet's most important companions. Abu Ayyub Ansari fell as a martyr during one of the earlier sieges of Istanbul, and his grave is in Istanbul. Haleti was considered to be among the Istanbulite poets, who used the local aspects of that city as well as language of the city in their poems, which later was labeled *mahallilesme* (localization). From this perspective, Haleti also tried to demonstrate his poetic stance. This poem is selected because of the way it weaves all of these elements together.

- 1 O reed pen! Come let us be co-lingual
Let us be the standard-bearer of heart's estate
- 2 To mention the standard-bearer of that Excellency
Is reason enough for Lover's mercy
- 3 The intercessor of sins, the pride of his friends
Namely His Excellency Abu Ayyub
- 4 He was with the Prophet in every holy war
Hence he's known for virtue, no wonder
- 5 When the shah [prophet] emigrated from Makkah
His honorable house became the chosen destination
- 6 The moon of the sky of mildness and dignity
Stayed at his home for seven months
- 7 Is it a surprise that his status is so high?
Since Huma descended onto his destination
- 8 It became like a whirling dome
His holy tomb, the source of lights
- 9 Its dome is the wheel of the beautiful universe
The dust of his tomb is the Kaabe of the angels
- 10 If the synagogue were to find the fog of its firewood
It would make it varnish-kohl for its eye
- 11 The fog of the candle of his grave, every time
Engenders mercy-scattering clouds
- 12 The bowl of the upside down sky getting dark
It is worthy to make its fog-like soot rapidly
- 13 Maybe they are made from that soot every single time
The task of the Divine Book and the Pen, orderly

- 14 The earth of his grave and the pivot on the dome
 Is worthy to be used by the eye of the star as kohl
 15 Each stone of the ground of his dervish lodge became
 The pearl of the crown of the royal crown
 16 The light wind in the twilight coming from his ground
 Makes pure bosom a rose garden
 17 For they may find life via grace
 Dead bodies surround his placed
 18 In order for him to be Rum's guard
 He sent that sultan, the almighty God
 19 O inferior heart, do it!
 Endless praises to the Protector's Excellency
 20 You became a helpless slave at his sill
 You became a servant of servants of the Messenger
 21 Allah judged you suitable for his service
 That bliss is enough for you in this world

HEXAGONAL POEM ON THE LACK OF NEED

This *museddes* indicates another distinct usage by Haleti because there is no other poem entitled "On the Lack of Need." When we consider Turkish literature speaking "on the lack of need," Ziya Pasha (d. 1880), a famous nineteenth-century Ottoman poet, comes to mind. Before Ziya Pasha, no poet, as I remember, is known to have written about the lack, which seems to be a modern theme.

I

I am lovesick from the sorrow of the love of the captivating beloved,
 if I die, I do not cure myself
 If I were left in darkness, I would not use the torch of the moon as a
 lantern
 I am a king-natured slave; that is why I do not concur with kings
 If my heart would be the king of the entire world I would not be pleased
 I am the king of love; I do not use sky and sun as throne and crown
 I am a wandering dervish; even if I die I do not offer my need to the
 world

II

I am a heavy-waved sea full of overflows
 I am the follower of the Mansoor al-Hallaj in the land of love (affection)
 I neither have a will from that world nor do I need somebody
 My throne is the ground of abasement; my crown is the cap of poverty

I am the king of love; I do not use sky and sun as throne and crown
 I am a wandering dervish; even if I die I do not offer my need to the
 world

III

You know the throne of king in the end becomes the wood of his coffin
 That tinhorn crown you see has beheaded many (people)
 Since there remains no trace from kings apparent such that
 I contemplated myself that I should not set eyes on crown and throne
 I am the king of love; I do not use sky and sun as throne and crown
 I am a wandering dervish; even if I die I do not offer my need to the
 world

IV

I enjoy myself if I keep myself off worldly pleasure
 I will not suffer when I die, if I remain as a beggar in the doorstep of love
 It does not protect my state from not expressing; were I to become voiceless
 If I could not find a good place that is fitting, I would stay out in the cold
 I am the king of love; I do not use sky and sun as throne and crown
 I am a wandering dervish; even if I die I do not offer my need to the
 world

V

O my king! Beware! Do not be deceived by that prosperous-in-trouble
 palace
 You will leave the emerald throne, the golden crown of this world
 Do not look at the heart of the miserable dervish with outrage
 Although I seem to be a dervish, it is only on the surface, verily
 I am the king of love; I do not use sky and sun as throne and crown
 I am a wandering dervish; even if I die I do not offer my need to the
 world

VI

Suffice it to make the fume of the fire of sighs my flag
 Royal trumpet is never required when I have my wailing
 The heart does not want dignity and rank with that world's suffering,
 If the world is destroyed, Haleti vallahi billahi (upon my oath)
 I am the king of love; I do not use sky and sun as throne and crown
 I am a wandering dervish; even if I die I do not offer my need to the world

ODE 3: "EGRI CAMPAIGN"

The Ottomans had wanted a conquering sultan since the time of Murad III, who had not joined any military campaigns. This fact was a cause of discomfort among subjects because they had been used to "warrior rulers" (*ghazi sultan*). The lack of a fighting (*ghazi*) sultan continued until the reign of Sultan Mehmed Khan III (r. 1595–1603), who picked up fighting once again and participated in military campaigns. Egri campaign (1596), in that sense, was of particularly significance for both the Ottoman rulers and their subjects; it had been quite a long time since an Ottoman victory in war demonstrated the power of the empire. So many poems commemorating the date and victory of Egri were penned due to its symbolic importance. As in the title of the *kaside*, it is observed that after the Egri campaign Sultan Mehmed Khan III was named as "the second conqueror," the first being Fatih Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451–1481), the conqueror of Constantinople.

It was composed and submitted when the second conqueror, Sultan Mehmet Khan III, returned from the Egri campaign.

- 1 The renowned king has polished off all enemies
He has made his reach his post, like a full moon
- 2 When Suleiman of his time has come to his place
The light wind of the conquest and victory showed highly care
- 3 The rose would be used to bestow all of its clothes to the morning
breeze's messenger
If a message were conveyed to the rose garden of his arrival
- 4 Now that the war time had passed by
The time of refreshment and pleasure came, the time of drinking
arrived
- 5 It is not surprising if desire-bud blossoms like a rose
The blood of the enemy made the earth's surface tulip-red in color
- 6 The body of the enemy that has reached its trouble
Quick-arriving sword has gone through that reach
- 7 Although the army of the enemy was so grand in number
Yet the grandness and the bones vanished in an instant
- 8 The king's body became a radiant candle, so to speak
Darkness had covered the universe with the dust of the battlefield
- 9 As the enemy looked at his mirror-like sword
Defeat-surface became for them as face-displayer
- 10 It was not oscillating alongside him but sword
As brigadiers oscillate in the battlefield
- 11 Rivals' blood would not be spilled onto the ground if
There was no influence of the star of King Mars of revenge
- 12 Would not override underfoot the horse-herd of the state's enemy
If the dapple-gray of sky would not bend the knee

- 13 There was a need to thrust a sword into the enemies of religion
 They were asleep by blindness completely
 14 If his brightness of sun of steamroller would not touch
 The state's enemy would remain crude in this world's garden
 15 The sea of his supremacy quenching his sharp-sword
 Became a cloud, pelted enemy's head with trouble
 16 His sword cut the tongue (language) of the enemy of religion
 Under his sovereignty, there had not remained any word
 17 He has presented his ponderousness to the day of the fight of the world
 Is it surprising if he enjoys the bride of conquest and victory?
 18 Survival of the universe is by essence of sword
 Because if there were no essence, attribute would not stand
 19 Were it not for averting his sacred body from catastrophe
 The dome of sky would not have set up nine tents on end
 20 If Cem had seen his gathering he would break his chalice
 If Sam had looked on his fight he would become dizzy and dazed
 21 If it knew his embroidery of fortune's seal
 With jealousy, marble would be mild, like a candle
 22 Unable bath that is in the wrath (of God)'s aura
 Do not give a body that is large as cheap grain to stars
 23 Skies would not come upon each other, successively
 If there weren't any conflux to fall upon his feet
 24 Is it capable of that, in his time of reign from time to time
 Each tiger of the forest does not heal to the sheep's wound
 25 Eyes of stars are in need of the earth of your lodge
 The nose of the evening is full of fragrance by the flavor of your justice
 26 Thinking that there is something akin to the scent of your endowment
 Morning wind sounds rosebud's mouth out, constantly
 27 Refreshed me, the earth, with the abundance of your grace,
 He who made your clear body the source of fountain of generosity.
 28 My reed pen: what it reveals is lawful magic
 Everything has been forbidden to it but your praise
 29 He would not obey Nizami in poetry (writing)
 If such order existed in your servant Haleti's state
 30 It is time to favor that ancient slave
 Your grace may particularly be universal to the folk of world in general
 31 So that your tasks in that world may hit the target like arrows
 Make the awry, the target of distress permanently
 32 In mattress of honor and tranquility with safety
 May The Ever-living (God), who never sleeps, preserve you constantly

ABOUT THE PRAISE OF SULTAN AHMET KHAN, WHICH WAS
RECITED WHEN I BECAME THE JUDGE OF ISTANBUL

Kasides were written to praise a patron in classical Islamic literature. This fact is current also in the Ottoman literature. Haleti recited the following kaside to praise Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617) when Haleti became the judge of Istanbul around 1611. He regarded the sultan as the main force behind his appointment.

- 1 It is me who by revering the lap of the sultan, the guardian of the world
There did not remain my jealousy of the possession of Solomon with
that bliss
- 2 While I have shed my tear footed-in-silt at the place of worry
My foot has gone to an abundant treasure suddenly
- 3 I am that ant that became an ear of grain gleaning at the harvest of
benevolence
When vicious enemy had not let me take a grain from it
- 4 I am that bird that embosomed the rose-essence of desire to my breast
While the enemy presumed my chest as teasel's thorn
- 5 Whenever I recall the district of throne-place of Husrev of time
The fume of the candle of my longing rises to the whirling roof
- 6 His Excellency the Han Ahmed, the clean essence that
No one would changes, the interior stone of his way with the essence
of heat
- 7 What a khan this king is, that every piece of stone in the place of his
prosperity
Worth the tax and tribute of the estate of China, to be thrown to
desert
- 8 How fortunate and wise he is that the dust of his beneficence's horse,
Is proven kohl to the brilliant star-like eye
- 9 No one aims at the other's head during his reign
But men of gathering aim at the head of the candle of darkness's land
- 10 In his days of justice destiny does not participate in murder
Because bloodshed is restricted to the eyelashes of the beautiful
- 11 If the light did not beg from his golden threshold
The sun of bliss would not give glory to the zodiac of possibility
- 12 If he handles a golden stick made from the beam of brilliant sun
No one will esteem Saturn worthy of being his gateman
- 13 His breath of Jesus of grace picks up from the ground of contempt
Upon looking at the wise men soulless with dolor
- 14 It is I that has tested the sword of my nature in many places
Is it surprising that I always invite my fellows to the field of contest?
- 15 No chance! To be similar to my own essence

- If the paw of sun goes into the pouch of blood a thousandfold
 16 O Haleti! You would, in the state of king of earth, enter, one day into
 The inner of high-dome of the rotating universe of the imperial council
 17 Rose of my hopes blossomed; it is proper from now on
 If you sing in his garden of praise like a nightingale
 18 By taking a share from everlasting-life like prophet Khidr
 Let the world be the state to that king of the time, like Alexander
 19 His virtuous hand as an example of the paw of the most brilliant sun,
 May always give the blessing of divine light of benevolence to his
 subjects

ODE 15: "ON PORTRAITURE OF THE SULTAN'S HORSES"

This kaside is chosen because it demonstrates another less known feature of the genre; sometimes the patron, in this case the sultan, would want the poets to recite an ode on a specific issue. Sultans generally ordered odes to be written on religious holidays called *iydiyye*, on spring they were called *bahariyye*, on summer they were called *temmuziyye*, on baths they were called *hammamiyye*, on fasting they were called *ramazaniyye*, and so on. In this case, the sultan had ordered a kaside to be written on the portraiture and praise of the majesty's horses. This is not a tradition in Ottoman poetry; one could find few if any such commissions before Haleti. Although a genre called *rahsiyye* consisted of odes on praising horses and was made famous by the kasides of Nef'i (d. 1635), what is new to the tradition of poetry was the commission by the patron itself.

Recited when I was entrusted by our holiness sultan with portraiture of his horses called Habib-i Siyah (Black Beloved) and Arslan (Lion)

- 1 How lovely! That night-colored horse of the esteemed night of Qadr
 Its body from top to bottom is the absolute might of Allah
- 2 O! That horse that its bliss-hoof's move has become
 Quite mild like the light wind of spring
- 3 If a bristle from its neck has gone into the hands of the morning breeze
 It would have made it a present for the beautiful women of Khata
- 4 If a drop of sweat fell from his body onto the ground,
 The earth of that ground would become musk until the Day of Judgment
- 5 If I called that rest-giver horse the horse of javelin
 Its arms would become the pride of time for the javelin-thrower
- 6 It has coquetry in every step, he would not resemble it
 If a coquettish beloved took off his garments,
- 7 Its foot's every horseshoe is a crescent in shape
 What a night it is, that its crescents are four
- 8 If Solomon of the time weren't the one riding it,

- It would not share the speed of the morning wind
 9 It is as if running water were running in slow-pace
 It does not admire wind in running, becomes a mountain in time of standing
 10 When it gets permission to speed, it passes the courier of wind
 Exhibits stars of night as sparks break out from its hoof
 11 Should they make its rein from the beam of the sun, it is worthy
 If the saddle blanket were of halo constantly, it has a point
 12 As the Excellency, king of the world mounts it
 As if he were Hamza riding on the black whale
 13 As if beaming pearl of tutor has come from the Black Sea
 Whenever it oozes with sweat as fortunate king runs
 14 Khosrow, generous as Khatem, Sultan Murad exalted as Cem
 (Dionysos)
 If dust arises from his path, it becomes kohl to the eye of stars
 15 King who is Alexander-natured, Alexander who is Chosroes-
 mannered
 The just having stars as servants, the sultan who is the ruler of fate
 16 The world is full of his grandeur that the useless rival supposes
 The neigh of his horse, that noise of the Trumpet (of Raphael)
 17 May not run away without making its wings fly—ruler of pigeon
 The heart-hunter hawk, in his days of justice
 18 Whenever he comes onto the Lion with his realm
 He is the king of the east, apparent from the zodiac of the lion
 19 It has a point if the king of seven-climes were inclined toward it
 It is he on the Lion, owner of wardship and the lion-rider
 20 O! My king, lionize the horse of Haleti's nature always
 Forasmuch as sultans esteem the agile horse
 21 If I were honored with high benevolence of the king
 I would bind the kettledrum of fame to the white elephant of the world
 22 As far bounded with a degree of fortune and the bliss of a king
 Let the hard-nosed horse of time make its enemy miserable
 23 Dark swarthy horse of night become mottled horse of day for ever
 and ever
 With the labor of the hostler of his imperial order, compatible with
 folk

“DUST OF SORROW”: THE ELEGY UTTERED WHEN OUR
 NOBLE SON NAMED ABD AL KADIR DIED

This elegy is uttered upon the death of Haleti's son.²⁵ Until the sixteenth century, there was rarely a glimpse of the individual in Ottoman literature. As stated earlier

about *vefeyat*, the Ottomans began to talk about the individual's death, but there was no tradition of uttering an elegy upon the death of a relative. In this elegy, Haleti expressed his emotions through his son, and he transformed literary figures of speech into a personal theme. It can be argued that this elegy is a demonstration of current life in Haleti's poetry.

- 1 His dust of sorrow gives untidiness to the mind
Might as well break down, this fusty iwan of sky
- 2 What would be done with the pillar of sighs of the world's people
Even if the structure of the palace of this world were strong
- 3 That burnisher and bowl always show embroideries of hardship
Do not mention the stars and the rotating wheel of sky by my side
- 4 Maybe the name of the body of the universe is removed
The title does not necessitate that it be used for that which is mortal
- 5 Why do we feel proud since it is we who know
The game of Time has cleared away the Seal of Solomon
- 6 Why lodge a person to that brutal host's home
That at last, s/he does not give up the guest without killing
- 7 What a white-bearded old man to that world is that
A thousand Rustams have become impuissant under its hands
- 8 At last, it winds up the rope of relevance to the wheel of fate
Then makes bands of braves defeated with magic
- 9 Constantly making the crescent and the star sling and stone,
It breaks down the mirror-like heart of the human
- 10 Showing no respect to his two eyes, it brings
Always, decline to the sun and inadequacy to the moon
- 11 It is not the paw of coral that stands at the base of sea
Which always makes the heart of the ocean bloody
- 12 It separates the heart from his part by torment, then makes
It near to the place of worry in the heart of wisdom-lovers
- 13 Was it not fate that made Yusuf captive of trouble?
Was it not fate that made the old man of Ken'an a weeper?
- 14 I conceived it as a tender friend but gradually
It has made the moaning heart fall into the bizarre troubles
- 15 Time, with the stone of hardship from my rose-garden
Scared a pleasantly nice-singing nightingale
- 16 How could the heart endure that cold hand of death?
It plucked the new-blossomed rosebud of the heart's rosery
- 17 Ax accidentally touching a mine of possibility
Shattered a bright gem-like essence
- 18 Where is that young and fresh sapling of my life's rosery
His mouth was a pistachio, his chin was an apple

- 19 To the fruit-laden tree in the rose-garden of heaven
 His swinging stature throws the stone of condemnation
 20 Where is that Jesus of time in the cradle of nobility
 Where is that second Joseph at the throne of beauty
 21 Where is his hair, the ambergris-colored hyacinth coated with rose
 Where is his mouth, the jewel-scattering pearl box
 22 It is a shame and grievance that under the stone of the grave
 Remained neither his inkpot-like lip nor pearl-like teeth
 23 Help! That fragrance of your spot and the quince of your dimple
 Was deemed worthy to rose-pink coffin by the time
 24 What a heart-melting sorrow blew suddenly
 To make the smiling-rose down at the heels before blossoming
 25 The brilliant sun of that sky of heart
 Became as if not risen, in his place; I do not know what to do
 26 That eye of the candle of my heart had gone off
 Is it a surprise that the mortal world would be seen of darkness
 27 Epitaph of that child's grave is worthy
 To forget this world if neglect manifests
 28 He made me go to the Garden of Eden but
 Left the dolor of Hell in the sorrow of separation
 29 The Joseph of my heart became the king of immortality's throne
 It is a surprise! How I would wait in that dungeon
 30 Let me drink the sherbet of death with pleasure of memory
 If it is the cure of that grief of separation
 31 Let me rend the robes of this body, otherwise
 There did not remain the collared dress of gown and chemise
 32 It would be harmonic with the trumpet of resurrection
 Would they match it with my sorrowful moan?
 33 However much fire and melting occur in darkness of grief!
 That shining candle never comes once more to this gathering
 34 It is worthy that Haleti gives languor to fortune
 By way of welcoming the judgment of God
 35 O my Lord! For his fair face, destroy
 Figures of riot from my records of deeds
 36 When doomsday comes and my deeds be evaluated
 Let that second Joseph make the balance light
 37 For the sake of tear-child of the heart of trouble-victims
 For the sake of his warm sigh and cold breath and hidden wound

STANZA 20: "THE DAY OF KERBELA"

Because Haleti is known as the Hayyam of Ottoman literature, we should definitely examine his stanzas. Stanza number 20 is chosen because of its allusion to the names of Hasan (d. 669), Ali (d. 661), and Huseyin (d. 680), who are the main figures *ehl-i beyt* (the family of the Prophet Muhammad). This stanza alludes to Kerbela, the place in which one of Ali's sons, Huseyin, was killed by Yazid (d. 683). The poet compares Yemisci Pasa to Yazid in this stanza by alluding to Hasan, Huseyin, and Ali.

Recited when Yemisci Paşa killed Tırnakçı Hasan Pasa, Ali Agha, and Huseyin Halife on the same day [October 16, 1603]

It would not be strange for that day of mourning
If it were said that it is severer than Kerbela
Where none remained, not Ali, nor Hasan, nor Huseyn
A Yazid made all of them martyred

STANZA 94: "PIPE-BOWL"

Stanza number 94 is a sign of Haleti's use of everyday life in his poems. As will be later analyzed through the ghazals, Haleti was one of the first poets, if not the first, to use smoke in his poems. This stanza shows how Haleti transformed an element of everyday life into a figure of speech for Ottoman poetry.

Do not suppose that they hold down the pipe-bowl to smoke
In every corner the brothers gather at one place
Bird of sorrow, does not allow the fruit of purpose to be grown
Friends, put the mouth-tambourine to their mouths today

STANZA 98: "SORROW OF JACOB"

Stanza 98 is chosen because of its allusion to Jacob and Joseph, who are both frequently cited figures in poetry. What characterizes this stanza is Jacob's gloom and grieving, which is aroused by Jacob's separation from his lovely son Joseph. This story related the separation of a lover (Jacob) and a beloved (Joseph) in Ottoman poetry.

It is you who has put Jacob in the hut of glooms
By separating him from his eyes' light, Joseph
By bringing divine love to the home of heart
Oh, sorrow of the world! I should make you just look from the threshold

STANZA 111: "A CLEAN RELATER OF POETRY"

Stanza 111 resembles a *fahriyye* (self-praise) that is generally included in kasides. This stanza is chosen to demonstrate Haleti's self-confidence toward his poetry. He states that his poetry resembles the cheek or lovelock of the beloved and that its smell spreads all around the world. To compare poetry to cheeks is the product of a new imagination probably unique to Haleti. Therefore, this stanza illuminates the new use of poetic figures of speech by Haleti and his self-praise in a form other than kaside.

Refreshing-breath of my poetry spreads far and wide; for what I have
mentioned
It is a rose-colored cheek of a charming or musk-smelling lovelock
I have never mentioned a vile enemy in my poems
I am a clean relater of poetry, a clean relater of poetry

STANZA 134: "HOLDER OF MEANING"

Stanza 134 is another self-praise in which Haleti identifies himself as the holder of meaning with claims of true poetry. In the process, Haleti uses a maxim to prove his argument because no one can disagree with a maxim. Using such arguments and making poetry more philosophical is a general characteristic of the stanzas. Hence it can be easily argued that Haleti uses *hikmet* (philosophy) in his poem and praises himself.

Holder of meaning like me
Oh Haleti! It is proper for him to claim poetry
Claims should not always be in words
It is a maxim that claims are in need of meanings

GHAZAL (LYRIC) 14: "ON TOBACCO"

Ghazal (lyric) is one of the most uttered forms in Islamic literature. When one writes about a poet's ability, the writer generally analyzes the poet's ability to write a ghazal. This is the most prominent genre in both Islamic and Ottoman literature. I focus on a few of Haleti's ghazals to show his poetic competence.

The first ghazal exemplifies Haleti's inclination to transform the poetic tradition as well as to include novelties in Ottoman society. Tobacco was totally new to the Ottomans in Haleti's time and was of great importance. Although it is new, Haleti uses tobacco for the first time as a poetic image, replacing centuries'-old motifs. His aim is to transform poetry and to be open to change in a world that had been determined by tradition. Haleti uttered this ghazal as a *yek-ahenk*, meaning that

the ghazal was written around just one theme, in this case, tobacco. Tobacco and related themes such as fog are used in every couplet.

Tobacco first appeared in the last decade of the sixteenth century or the first decade of seventeenth century.²⁶ According to Fehmi Yılmaz, tobacco was banned by imperial decree in 1609, 1610, 1614, 1618, and 1619. It can be argued that tobacco gained its attraction and reaction in society at the same time. Haleti passed away in 1631, so we can assume that he wrote this ghazal due to the attraction and the reaction caused by tobacco.

- 1 That houri-like (beloved), got a tobacco pipe
As if they have put into the River in Eden a pipe
- 2 Tobacco suits very well to your bud-like mouth
That brightener lip which is like a garnet of fire-color
- 3 You are smoking with foreigners but the fire of jealousy
Has burned my soul; fogs have sprung up
- 4 Since I fall into separation my unique job is smoking
So that the fog of my soul fumes and the enemy may not know
- 5 Because of the sorrow of the fog in the home of the soul, my darling
I am afraid that Haleti shall fume till he transumes to nonexistent

GHAZAL (LYRIC) 57: "ON SIGH"

This ghazal is about separation. In the case of separation, the lover acts in two ways: the lover either sighs or has tears. The lover resembles Jacob and *Zuleyha* because they were both the real lovers of Joseph. Therefore, it can easily be said that this ghazal is about separation from the beloved and the patience of the lover against that separation as narrated through Jacob, Zuleyha, and Joseph.

- 1 The smoke of my sigh gave grief to the high world
Stars of my fortune began to be ashamed from the stars
- 2 Where are those times that I used to irrigate your threshold with my
tears?
Now there remains no water in my eyes because of the bosom's heat
- 3 Do not escape from the lover who has been given the beauty of Joseph
Water with tears of Jacob and heat with fever of Zuleyha
- 4 Oh my master-rider! Do not be warmhearted with lovers
Do not teach quickness to lives of each of them
- 5 The memory of Jacob is contented even when morning wind does
not blow
The smell of tunica is not the gate in the land of my patience
- 6 Oh Haleti! I have turned to inanimate figures because of my weakness
The beloved has right not to make me the object of her/his glances at
the gathering

GHAZAL (LYRIC) 144: "ON FIRE OF LOVE"

This ghazal resembles the previous one in some respects. In Ottoman literature, a sigh is thought to have smoke in it because it stems from a heart on fire. Considering fire and smoke, it is not wrong to argue that tobacco and sight resemble each other. This ghazal relates some main characteristics of the lover and the beloved in one poem. Those characteristics are identified as sigh, sorrow, coquetry, and love for gold and silver, respectively.

- 1 Having made the smoke of my sigh the fire-wyvern
That beloved has begun to scare the world with me
- 2 Our nutrition is food of sorrow in the day and night
Love is our benefactor, each and every time,
- 3 Without even setting foot on the stirrup of coquetry and whims
That master-rider bewitched the estate of the heart
- 4 If a lover has no gold and silver,
The beloved neither pities on his tears nor looks at the lover's face
- 5 Is it surprising that its delight lasts until the end of life?
There is no powder in the universe like the floss of your lips
- 6 O Haleti! If the arrow of the wheel of fate faces with words
Its mouth gapes with astonishment like a pinhole

GHAZAL (LYRIC) 170: "FINGER OF ASTONISHMENT"

This ghazal relates the psychological and spiritual conditions of a lover who has withdrawn from the felicity of this world and has turned to loneliness in which the person can enjoy his or her love. Therefore, the only purpose of the lover's life is the beloved and his or her destination. In this psychological state, the lover accepts being the subject of the beloved's coquetry.

- 1 I've withdrawn from this gathering's pure honey long since
What it brings to my brackish mouth is only the finger of astonishment
- 2 My crimson wound is a garnet ring that is aware of me
My bent-doubled stature is a sealed-ring of the king of affection
- 3 At whichever destination you settle down, it again turns out to ranges
of the moon
Wherever you coquet it is the coquet-place of chance and bliss
- 4 A trouble-suffering lover like me is never granted
This beloved's silver-colored bosom is a breast of bliss
- 5 Is it surprising if the fearless coquette does not remember?
As the body of the fearful Haleti is made of sorrow

NOTES

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1. Baki Tezcan, "The Second Empire: The Transformation of the Ottoman Polity in the Early Modern Era," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29, no. 3 (2009): 563.
2. Tezcan, "The Second Empire," 567.
3. Tezcan, "The Second Empire," 568.
4. For this change in the court politics, see Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617), and His Immediate Predecessors" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2010), 148–97.
5. For further information see Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 91–112.
6. Jane Hathaway, "Habeşi Mehmed Agha: The First Chief Harem Eunuch (Darüssaade Ağası) of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Islamic Scholarly Tradition: Studies in History, Law, and Thought in Honor of Professor Michael Allan Cook*, ed. Asad Q. Ahmed, Behnam Sadeghi, and Michael Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 182. Also see Jane Hathaway, *Beshir Agha, Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).
7. Hatice Aynur, "Ottoman Literature." In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 481–520, 504.
8. Baki Tezcan, "Tarih Üzerinden Siyaset: Erken Modern Osmanlı Tarih yazımı," in *Erken Modern Osmanlılar*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan-Daniel Goffman, çev. Onur Güneş Ayas (İstanbul: Timaş, 2011), 238.
9. For a discussion on the issue, see Tülün Değirmenci, *İktidar Oyunları ve Resimli Kitaplar: II. Osman Devrinde Değişen Güç Simgeleri* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2012), 82.
10. See Hathaway, "Habeşi Mehmed Agha," 184–91.
11. See Değirmenci, *İktidar Oyunları ve Resimli Kitaplar*.
12. Tezcan, "The Second Empire," 563.
13. Ottoman literature refers to a branch of Islamic literature that consists of Arabic, Persian, Chagatai, Urdu, and Kurdish literatures. Although identifying the literature of Muslim Turks, who had lived around Anatolia before the twentieth century, is disputable (Divan literature, classical Turkish literature, Old Turkish literature are among them), the timespan of this literature encompasses the eleventh to the last quarter of the nineteenth centuries. Fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in general, are seen as the golden period of Ottoman literature due to the presence of many great Ottoman poets. For the discussion on naming of that literature, see Ömer Faruk Akün, "Divan Edebiyatı," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* 9 (1994): 389–427.
14. Aynur, "Ottoman Literature," 482, 496.
15. Aynur, "Ottoman Literature," 509.
16. For architectural transformation in seventeenth-century Istanbul, see Maurice Cerasi, "İstanbul 1620–1750: Change and Tradition," in *The City in Islamic World I*, ed. H. Altenmüller (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 465–89.

17. Aynur, "Ottoman Literature," 498.
18. Aynur, "Ottoman Literature," 510.
19. Aynur, "Ottoman Literature," 489.
20. Cemal Kafadar, "Sohbete Çelebi, Çelebiye mecmua . . .," in *Mecmua: Osmanlı Edebiyatının Kırkambarı*, Hatice Aynur vd. (hızl.) (İstanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2012), 45.
21. For a good analysis of *Seyahatname*, see Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan, and Robert Dankoff, eds., *Evliya Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of His Birth* (Istanbul: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, 2012).
22. The information related to the life and work of Haletî substantially comes from Bayram Ali Kaya, *The Divan of 'Azmiade Haleti, Introduction and Critical Edition: 'Azmiade Haleti Divanı Tenkitli Metin* (Cambridge: Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, Harvard University, 2003). The poems cited are from this edition as well.
23. Nev'î-zade Atâî, *Şaka'îk-i Nu'maniye ve Zeylleri* (Hada'îku'l-Hakayık fî Tekmiletî'ş-Şakayık), ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul, 1989), C. 3, 741.
24. Kaya, *The Divan of 'Azmiade Haleti*, 24.
25. Although the exact date of his death is unknown, the most probable date is December 1612 or January 1613; Kaya, *The Divan of 'Azmiade Haleti*.
26. See Fehmi Yılmaz, "Tütün," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* 42 (2012): 1.

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III. Mughal Sanskrit Literature

THE BOOK OF WAR AND THE TREASURY OF COMPASSION

AUDREY TRUSCHKE

The Mughals are often lauded as a Persian-medium dynasty, a somewhat misleading classification that has caused many scholars to underemphasize the multilingual nature of Mughal literary culture. Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) did indeed declare Persian the official administrative tongue in 1582, and he allocated unparalleled imperial resources to supporting Persian-medium literature, including poetry, philosophy, and history. At the time, Persian was the language of rule and culture across much of the wider Islamicate world. Accordingly, this language offered the Mughals prestige, status, and access to an intellectual and literary realm shared by Safavid Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and much of Central Asia. Although Akbar and his successors supported Persian literature above all other written traditions, Mughal devotion to Persian was never exclusionary. Beginning with Babur (r. 1526–1530), the Mughal kings knew Turkish and also patronized Arabic-speaking scholars and religious thinkers. In addition, the Mughal rulers from Akbar onward spoke a form of Old Hindi or Hindavi and also sponsored Hindi literary texts. Equally important and far less well-known, the Mughals evinced a deep, sustained interest in Sanskrit literature.

Akbar, Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), and Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658) all sponsored Persian translations of Sanskrit texts, such as collections of stories and multiple versions of the two great Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. These three emperors also attracted Sanskrit scholars to their courts, sponsored the production of dozens of Sanskrit literary works, and occasionally received

Sanskrit texts written for Mughal consumption.¹ In this essay, I translate excerpts from two works that demonstrate the wide-ranging imperial Mughal engagements with Sanskrit literary culture under Akbar: the *Razmnama* (Book of War), which was the major Persian translation of the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*, and the *Kriparasakosha* (Treasury of Compassion), a Sanskrit praise poem written for Akbar to secure royal orders benefiting certain Gujarati Jain communities. These two works bring out some of the crucial and often neglected roles of Sanskrit in the Mughal multilingual literary tradition.

Mughal engagements with Sanskrit literature—through translation, sponsorship, and reception—are well documented in primary sources but neglected by modern scholars for several reasons. In part, Mughal historians have long mistakenly understood Akbar's 1582 declaration of Persian as his polity's administrative medium as evidence that Persian was declared the language of empire in all senses. This assumption that Persian constituted *the* Mughal tongue obviated any need to look at other languages that might have had imperial cache in Mughal India. In addition, Sanskrit works that the Mughals translated into Persian have long suffered from the modern Western notion that translation is a derivative act, hardly worthy of study. The early Orientalists further compounded the problem by declaring Indo-Persian translations of Sanskrit materials to be “flimsy paraphrase[s],” calling out the *Razmnama* specifically as “nothing more than an abstract, and that very indifferently executed.”² In this view, not only are works such as the *Razmnama* derivative translations but poor ones at that. Scholars have overlooked works written in Sanskrit under Mughal support or for Mughal consumption for a more mundane reason—few Mughal historians know Sanskrit. This language gap makes Mughal-associated Sanskrit works, plentiful though they are, difficult or impossible for most historians to access. I offer a small step toward bridging that gap here and in chapter 2 of this volume (“A Mughal Debate About Jain Asceticism”) by translating imperially related Sanskrit materials.

There is an additional formidable obstacle to Mughal historians accepting Sanskrit texts—both in translation and original compositions—as a significant part of Mughal literary culture. Expanding Mughal literature to include Sanskrit and Sanskrit-based materials requires us to rethink our most basic assumptions about the Mughal Empire and its cultural realm. As recently as 2002, Wheeler Thackston wrote: “The history of literature in the Mughal Empire is basically the history of Persian.”³ If we follow the evidence in multiple languages, this position quickly becomes untenable. However, to move beyond superficial recognition of this multilingual imperial reality, we must be willing to consider that many standard ideas about Mughal literature and thus Mughal culture more broadly are overly restrictive. The Mughals were not only a multicultural but also a multilingual dynasty. Accordingly, Mughal studies needs to become a more multilingual field if historians are to make sense of the layered identities cultivated by Mughal elites. The texts presented here begin to outline some of the underappreciated linguistic and cultural breadth of Mughal literature.

The first excerpt comes from the *Razmnama*, the major Akbar-period translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* is the longer of the two great Indian epics and tells the saga of a family-turned-world-war over a kingdom in northern India. In its Sanskrit versions, the *Mahabharata* stretches to roughly 75,000 verses (rounded to 100,000 verses traditionally),⁴ approximately seven times the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined or fifteen times the length of the Bible. Emperor Akbar ordered the rendering of the entire Sanskrit epic into Persian in the early 1580s, and the translation took several years to complete. Akbar's court had taken up a few Sanskrit texts for translation before the *Mahabharata*, such as the *Atharva Veda*, a religious text (the translation was never realized), and the *Simhasana-dvatrimshika* ('Thirty-Two Tales of the Throne'), a popular collection of Sanskrit stories.⁵ But the *Razmnama* inaugurated a watershed of Mughal Persian renderings of Sanskrit stories during the 1580s and 1590s, including the *Ramayana*, several astronomical and mathematical treatises, additional story works such as the *Pancatantra* (Five Tales), and even literary histories such as the *Rajatarangini* (River of Kings).⁶

Of more than a dozen Sanskrit works that were rendered into Persian under Akbar's orders, the *Razmnama* was by far the longest and elicited the most substantial investment of imperial resources. It took a team of translators several years to produce the *Book of War*. Nobody involved in the project knew both Sanskrit and Persian, so two teams of translators worked in tandem. A group of five Brahmins read the text in Sanskrit and orally translated it into Hindi. A second team of four Mughal translators heard the epic in Hindi and wrote down the story in Persian. This verbal communication via a Hindi vernacular and the names of the Sanskrit-knowing Brahmins are described in a colophon to the *Razmnama*.⁷ The textual translation was checked by Naqib Khan, a court historian who oversaw the entire effort, and even by Akbar himself on occasion.⁸ The completed translation includes all eighteen books of the Sanskrit epic, along with many of the smaller side stories and digressions, plus the *Harivamsha* appendix. In a modern edition, the translation runs to more than 2,000 pages of printed Persian text.⁹ Once the text of the *Razmnama* was finalized, court artists lavishly illustrated the imperial copy, and several subimperial illuminated copies were produced in the following decades. The illustrations further adapted the Indian epic for a new audience.¹⁰ The *Razmnama* was repeatedly recopied for centuries, and hundreds of manuscripts of the translated epic survive today in India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere.

Akbar's court largely understood the *Mahabharata* epic as a story about kingship. In his introduction to the translation, Abu al-Fazl, one of Akbar's principle ideologues, described the text thus: "It is no secret that of the 100,000 shlokas (verses) in the [Mahabharat], 24,000 concern the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, which is a model for the wise on warnings and examples, battle and carnage. The rest concerns advice, guidance, stories, and descriptions of war and feasting."¹¹ Elsewhere in his introduction, Abu al-Fazl explicitly lists

advice for kings as one of the cardinal reasons behind Akbar's sponsorship of the *Razmnama*.¹²

The Mughals found the whole of the *Mahabharata* an edifying reflection on rulership, but they judged book twelve, the *Shant Parvan* (*Shanti Parvan* in Sanskrit, Book of Peace), especially valuable in this regard. Book twelve begins after the conclusion of the great battle between two sets of cousin-brothers, which wiped out a nearly incalculable number of people on both sides. In the aftermath of near total destruction, King Yudhishthira prepared to ascend the throne but struggled with how to rule properly in a postapocalyptic world. The *Book of Peace* contains advice to the would-be king given by Bhishma, a patriarch who was mortally wounded in the battle but clung to life to share his wisdom. This section of the *Mahabharata* constitutes a substantial portion of the Sanskrit epic and was translated into Persian at even greater length, constituting a full 25 percent of Akbar's translation.¹³ In his introduction, Abu al-Fazl singles out for special praise "the advice, guidance, and manners for inner and outer rulership narrated by wise (*hakim*) Bhishma that are generally approved by intellectuals and liked by the wise."¹⁴ Moreover, the Mughal translators adjusted Bhishma's counsel to make it palatable and relevant to Akbar, both aesthetically and instructionally. They inserted verses of Persian poetry throughout much of Bhishma's guidance that are quoted from the great masters of Persian literature, including the likes of Nizami, Hafiz, and Sa'di. The translators also adjusted the content of Bhishma's speech to address topics pertinent to Akbar and took out ideas that would have fit poorly in a Mughal context.

The translation here is an especially compelling episode from the *Book of Peace* that concerns the ancient Indian king Manu. According to Bhishma, Manu was the first earthly monarch and a worthy model for how to bring justice and peace to a chaotic situation. Several things are noteworthy about the *Razmnama*'s rendition of Manu's story. First, some features of this excerpt are characteristic of the *Razmnama* more generally. The episode is a relatively close translation of the parallel portion of Sanskrit text.¹⁵ The story features Hindu gods as well as an Islamic-style God, a ubiquitous character throughout the Persian translation.¹⁶ Second, the translators employ a Persianate idiom to talk about kings (*padshah*) and kingship (*padshahi*). The translators also occasionally use the Sanskrit word *raja* (king), but the emphasis remains on being an Indian *padshah*, an issue germane to Akbar, the primary audience of this translation. Last, this episode contains the single overt mention of Emperor Akbar so far identified in the *Razmnama*. At the end of the episode, the translators enact an earlier teaching in Manu's story that "subjects ought to pray for their king" and name and laud their patron. Manu's saga then ends with verses quoted from the famous fourteenth-century poet Sa'di that seem to apply equally to Manu and Akbar, an ancient and the current Indian sovereign. Overall, Manu's story as told in the *Razmnama* sheds light on the formulation of political advice in the Mughal Empire, how literature (both prose and poetry) was being redefined in Mughal India, and how Akbar's court invoked the deep history of subcontinental kingship.

The second translation is the entirety of the *Kriparasakosha* (Treasury of Compassion), a Sanskrit praise poem. The work was written by Shanticandra, a follower of Jainism, a minority religious tradition in Mughal India. The encomium is one of several Sanskrit works written explicitly for the enjoyment and edification of Mughal elites. Sanskrit praise poems were also dedicated to individuals such as 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, Asaf Khan, and several Mughal kings and princes.¹⁷ More than half a dozen such works survive today, but this body of materials remains virtually unknown to modern scholars. Here I translate all 128 verses of the *Treasury of Compassion* to make this important work available for the first time to Mughal cultural and literary historians.

Before addressing the contents of the *Treasury of Compassion*, a few words are necessary concerning the Sanskrit language in the Mughal context. So far as we know, Akbar did not know Sanskrit, nor did any other Mughal kings. This basic fact renders the reception of Shanticandra's poem and similar Sanskrit encomia enigmatic. How did Mughal ruling elites receive texts written in a language inaccessible to them? I have suggested elsewhere that the *Treasury of Compassion* is written in simple enough Sanskrit that Akbar, given his knowledge of literary Hindi, could have understood some strings of words.¹⁸ The *Kriparasakosha* primarily concerns Akbar's life and family, which would have aided a transverse comprehension. Even the work's mythological and literary references were likely familiar to Akbar and other Mughal elites who were well versed in Sanskrit and Hindi stories through translations and oral retellings. It is also possible that such poems were verbally translated for the Mughal kings, similar to the oral transmission of Sanskrit texts that were rendered into Persian. Although this is plausible, we lack direct evidence of such a verbal transmission. Still, even absent full (or any) comprehension, this Sanskrit poem and others like it claim an imperial reception. Accordingly, not unlike the many Arabic works produced at the Mughal court, Sanskrit praise poems for imperial figures constitute an important and overlooked part of Mughal literary culture.

The *Treasury of Compassion* contains descriptions of the early Mughal kings, Akbar's childhood and military conquests, and Mughal imperial culture. After the customary opening praise (in this case to Jina), Shanticandra first addresses the Mughals' ancestral lands of Khurasan and Kabul. After briefly detailing the reigns of Babur and Humayun, Shanticandra discusses Akbar's mother, especially focusing on when she was pregnant with Akbar. Akbar's birth occurs roughly one third of the way through the poem, and the rest of the text focuses on him. Shanticandra divides his extensive treatment of Akbar into three major sections: the king's youth, his conquests, and his characteristics as a ruler. Shanticandra freely admits certain markers of the Mughals' Perso-Islamic culture. For example, he notes that Fatehpur Sikri was named as such because of its meaning of "city of victory" in Persian. He mentions Akbar's marriages to Rajput women and the *din-i ilahi*, Akbar's discipleship program. However, at times the poet prefers to stay within the well-worn conventions of Sanskrit literature. When detailing Akbar's military victories, for instance, Shanticandra names no actual rulers, kingdoms, or even regions. Instead he talks

about Akbar's conquest of the four directions (*digvijaya* in Sanskrit) that exhibits the king's domination over a timeless Indian landscape defined by topographical features and Hindu mythology. Shanticandra also brings in specifically Jain ideas. For example, he repeatedly lauds Akbar's compassion (*kripa*, also a play on the title of the text) to all living beings, a Jain preoccupation. Shanticandra also mentions specific imperial concessions to the Tapa Gaccha, Shanticandra's Jain lineage. He even describes aspects of Akbar's family history, such as his mother's pregnancy with Akbar, according to Jain literary norms. For instance, Akbar's mother is depicted as fearless and as having exhibited enhanced empathy while pregnant, which signalled that she was carrying a child destined for greatness.

Shanticandra proclaims in both the opening and closing of his work that he is writing "for the sake of enlightening (*pratibodha*) glorious padshah Akbar."¹⁹ In the closing lines of his work, he further clarifies that Akbar's enlightenment resulted in a series of imperial orders (*farmans*) that were beneficial for the Gujarati Jain community, including tax relief, release of prisoners, bans on animal slaughter, and more.²⁰ Several of the imperial orders that Shanticandra names are confirmed by other sources. More generally, numerous Persian and Sanskrit texts attest that Jain monks frequently secured concessions from Akbar (and later from Jahangir), and several *farmans* are extant in the original Persian or in translation. In terms of Shanticandra in particular, a contemporary Sanskrit text testifies to the efficacious power of the *Treasury of Compassion*:

Then Shanticandra, the best of the Jains—who bears royal messages, whose hand delivers *farmans* regarding the *jizya* and non-violence, and who is skilled in continually reciting the *Treasury of Compassion* [to the shah] on the order of [Hiravijaya] Suri—was joyfully sent from his own side to the guru by the king.²¹

Although it is unlikely that we will ever know for certain whether Shanticandra presented his poem to Akbar (much less whether or how Akbar understood the Sanskrit verses), Gujarati Jains, who enjoyed regular contact with the Mughals, perceived Sanskrit literature as a legitimate, effective way of pursuing political aims. They also treated the Mughals as worthy to be incorporated into Sanskrit literature and its powerful idioms of kingship.

Taken together, the *Razmnama* and the *Kriparasakosha* map out some of the diverse roles of Sanskrit in Mughal literary culture under Akbar. Imperial patrons sponsored the translation of Sanskrit works, and original Sanskrit poems were addressed to members of the ruling elite. Both Jain and Brahman Sanskrit thinkers populated Akbar's court and played crucial roles in these cross-cultural exchanges. When scholars portray the Mughals as a Persianate or Persian-medium dynasty, they tend to miss these cross-cultural, multilingual aspects of the Mughal imperial tradition. Modern resistance notwithstanding, Sanskrit was not merely a periodic oddity at the Mughal court but a crucial, consistent part of its literary fabric that we would be well served to recover.

TRANSLATION

Bhishma's Advice to Yudhishthira in the Book of War (Razmnama)

THE TALE OF THE SULTANAT OF MANU

Bhikham Pitama said,²²

The first responsibility of subjects is to pray for their padshah, and whoever fails to pray for the padshahs will find no prosperity in life, nor ease in this world. People should not live in a land that lacks a strong padshah. It is also not proper to reside in a kingdom with a female padshah. It is best for a person to not live in a kingdom with a child padshah. If a person is there, then he should pray that God Exalted²³ protects that child as he grows and shows him kindness. A padshah should not trouble or oppress those who do right by him. If subjects do as the padshah says and accordingly send their wealth, even without a tax collector, to that righteous one, then a padshah need not send a person with a harsh disposition who oppresses the people to bear down on them. Similarly, if a thing that will soften in fire becomes soft without fire, then it is not necessary to throw it into the fire. Subjects must pray for their padshah because, if there is no padshah, then they may become lax one day and allow their wives and daughters to be carried off. For that reason, God Exalted created the padshah to weaken the control of tyrants over the oppressed. Without a padshah it would be on land just as it is in the sea where big fish eat small fish. Everyone who is stronger would devour the flesh of the poor and weak.

One time, a situation arose where there was no raja in the world. Anybody who was strong oppressed and overpowered the weak. Feeling strained by this oppression, the people of the world approached Manu, who was one of Brahma's sons, and beseeched him to come and rule among them. Manu replied, "You are an infirm people, but I cannot accept such work among you because if someone does right by you a thousand times you are still not pleased and complain about him. I have no desire for such a headache." They replied, "We promise to give you one tenth of what we farm in order to please you, and one quarter of the merit we earn will belong to you. Just like Indra is lord of thirty-three crores of gods²⁴ in heaven, be lord over the earth! Be like Indra in this world!"

After hearing their promises, Manu agreed to rule over them, and the people of the earth made Manu their raja. When Manu became their leader, divine mercy descended on the earth. It was like when the land becomes green and verdant after rain. All the people of the earth were overjoyed with his rulership. In his mercy, God Glorified and Exalted²⁵ forgave the people all their sins, and the world became cultivated and lush. When they saw the blessing of his feet, men gave wealth, fabric, jewels, and whatever they had as tribute to please him.

Raja (Manu) showed complete compassion and mercy to the world and spoke to everyone with visible joy. Day by day, his majesty and pomp increased, and many years passed on earth in his rule and good fortune. Because of his virtuous conduct,

God Exalted granted him a long, generous life. It is hoped, according to the magnificence of God Glorified and Exalted that the shadow of the justice and compassion of his most exalted majesty, Shah Akbar—under whose justice, compassion, and grace all people in the world rest—would be perpetual and everlasting on earth so long as the world exists.

O God! This king, a friend to those in need,
in whose shadow lies the refuge of the world,
may you grant him long life on this earth.
May you enliven his heart through obedience to God.
So long as there is day and night, may the king be on the throne,
and may prosperity reach the zenith of the sky!²⁶

TRANSLATION

Shanticandra's Sanskrit Praise Poem to Akbar

TREASURY OF COMPASSION (KRIPARASAKOSHA)

For the sake of enlightening glorious Shah Akbar, the *Treasury of Compassion* is composed by the great teacher Santicandra.²⁷

OPENING PRAISE²⁸

He who sees the world perfectly clearly²⁹ with his eye of wisdom,
the wise one who pervades the entire universe and lacks enmity,
the divine one who cares for all people with a mind disposed to compassion,
I meditate on this bull-like leader in order to secure good favor.

He who possesses neither agitation nor greed and does not partake in
amorous play,
who does not nourish faults and lacks both anger and satisfaction,
who breaks open the transient states of existence,
I serve that great man.

Homage to that pure, detached lord who protects the world, whose
imperceptible acts
are renowned among the wise but difficult for ordinary people to
perceive,
whose speech is beyond the expressive capacity of even skilled orators
and who is not matched even by the moons of ascetics. He possesses
pleasing virtues and the highest eternal bliss.

He is never overcome by any worldly ignorance,
like an island is not split by oceanic waves.

That lord has crossed over to the far side of the supreme darkness of
cyclical existence.

Even at the furthest edge of the ocean, is there not a lotus?

He delights people by speaking favorably even to enemies.
The creator endowed his mind and tongue
with a sweet, purifying substance.
Homage to that good one who pleases the heart.

May hidden virtues become manifest in good people
through the sight of even his seemingly bad and contrary actions,
just as sweet, wholesome nectar comes from ripe fruit.
That virtuous trickster who benefits good people, is to be praised.³⁰

KHURASAN

In another land there is a stunningly beautiful region,
devoid of any trace of suffering, known as glorious Khurasan.

There stalks bowed by ripening bunches of dates
render the lands surrounding the city difficult to traverse.

There swift horses with delicate ears and high shoulders have
minds blinded by anger and crooked faces, but never the kings. [v. 10]

There short-eared horses are the equal of Indra's long-eared horse:
they are the single best means of obtaining victory for a king.

There the best foods such as walnuts are scattered everywhere like grain.
How can I describe the incredibly fertile soil there?

KABUL

In Khurasan is a lovely city by the name of Kabul
that ought to be described as foremost among cities.
A tall wall shines in its ramparts,
as a line of beautiful, tall-waisted women are resplendent in the harem.

In the palace young beautiful women never see the sun
and always remain in seclusion.

Around the outskirts dense trees
cover the vast land with shade.

There trees burst into bloom as expected during the rainy season,
as if they were the well-served subjects of the king.
At that time clouds poured forth, lightening flashed,
and thunder resounded again and again.

Having seen that city's ruler, whose decrees are potent,
the beautiful goddess of wealth fearlessly
came from all directions
to make that place her sole home.

Exhaustion is seen only in oil lamps at the light of dawn.
Rising and setting is seen only in the sun.
Waxing and waning is noticed only in the moon.
But no such fluctuations are observed in the people whose splendor
radiates.

BABUR

In Kabul there is a noble hearted ruler whom all enemies fear:
Babur, bearer of pure fame, the king of the Mughals.³¹

His immense splendor, which incinerates enemies as if they were
timber,
is the well-known submarine fire.
For kindling he provokes heaps of tears
from the lotus-eyed wives of enemy kings.

Against his taut bow, the proud curved eyebrows
of enemy women pale in comparison.
When he easily draws floods of arrows on his bow,
the knot of military pride of enemy kings falls apart. [v. 20]

HUMAYUN

To Babur was born a son by the name of Humayun,
a jewel among men.
When she was carrying him in her womb, his mother shone
like an oyster bearing a precious pearl.

Humayun grew up to become a gem among sons
 with splendor, youth, and virtues.
 Like the summer sun he was rich in formidable qualities
 and hard to bear for even legions of enemies.

As if driven by jealousy of one another
 all the arts accumulated in him.
 Surely when a good lover is found he becomes
 nearly bound to the beds of deer-eyed women.

The royal prince appointed love (*smara*), whose highest object
 is piercing unseen targets, the chief of the arts.
 He knew the art of archery and shot based on sound alone.
 How does such a man not become predominant among the lines of
 archers?

Wise Babur appointed him ruler over the entire earth,
 saying that he was fit in every way like Rama.
Coli Begam: Akbar's Mother
 The Queen, called Coli Begam,³² enjoys the riches of love.
 She is to the king as Lakshmi is to Vishnu.

Within the stunning, vast harem she alone is the object of the king's
 affections,
 just like among the many gorgeous stars only Rohini is the beloved of
 the cool-rayed moon.

Even though she has never been seen even by the sun, a painter,
 like a lotus pond, accurately depicts her as delighting in being a faith-
 ful wife.

Because the moon was conquered by her beautiful face and eyes,
 the sun in its ascent and the moon in descent came together
 in order to collaborate on how to defeat those features.
 If it were otherwise, then how could the sun and the moon inhabit a
 single place?

She adorned her body with lines of ornaments
 made from rubies, pearls, gems, and gold.
 But in truth the great splendor of her body
 actually increased that of the jewels. [v. 30]

With those two enjoying the riches of ruling the earth
 time passed full of abundant pleasure,

just as the night moves quickly when the full moon and lovely moon-
light
partake of pleasures in the circle of the sky.

COLI BEGAM'S PREGNANCY

The queen, whose greatness overshadows all like the sun,
bore her pregnancy like an inlaid floor carrying the chief jewel.³³
She experienced a rise of good fortune indicated by lovely dreams.
That pregnancy gave great joy to the pure family.

When her son descended, the wife of the king of the earth
saw her lion-like child, seated
with a parasol held over him by female attendants.
She drank in the full orb of his moon-like face.

Like the sprout of a divine wishing tree that grants desires in Indra's garden,
the womb grew in the lovely wife of the foremost sovereign.

Under the influence of her pregnancy, auspicious cravings
became manifested in that lustrous woman.
The virtuous, powerful world emperor, ruler of the earth
fulfilled those cravings quickly.³⁴

One morning, she turned away from the shining mirror a barber's wife
placed in front of her
and instead feverishly desired a sharpened, dazzling sword.
She did not see the injury that resulted from trying to see the reflection
of the sun and the moon.
Her mind was agitated by the sorrows of others due to the rise of her
pregnancy's power.

That beautiful woman, her mind devoid of fear, played with a lion in
her lap.
Even though forbidden to do so by her servants, she mounted a mad ele-
phant without reins.
She thought that a lovely horse drawn in a picture was jumping off the
page.
That virtuous woman passed the time with all sorts of such behaviors.

Surely musk, easily obtained by slaying a deer, was not desired to deco-
rate her limbs.
Her mind deemed pearls found by breaking open oyster shells unaccept-
able ornaments.

As you know, a woman whose heart is pure of desire does not wear silk clothes.

When pregnant with a son, a mother is an ocean of Hari's immense compassion.³⁵

That great-minded woman desired to give away Mount Meru,
and likewise Tara and Rohana mountains.
Again and again she criticized King Karna
who was generous beyond measure..

She did not withhold courtesy even from disagreeable people.
Even in response to the coarse words of servants, that cultured woman
did not speak unbecomingly. [v. 40]

AKBAR'S BIRTH AND NAMING

Then, when the time was right, she gave birth to a son,
like the day of the full moon delivers the moon's orb.
His appearance delighted his relatives.
He possessed honor and was full of good fortune.

Courtesans danced, overflowing with ornaments and with eyes like
those of playful deer.
The lotus-eyed women of the family, overcome with joy, repeatedly
offered good wishes.
Those with loud drums pronounced blessings in every courtyard.
He who held sway over the circle of the earth ordered a great festival for
the birth of his son.

On an auspicious day he of evident might,
strongest among the strong in all fortes, of visible splendor,
born of the glorious shah, was declared
by his mother and father to be called "Akbar."

a means the Supreme Lord, *k* Brahman, *a* the Soul,
and *vara* best, so that he [*akabara*] is the best of these [three].³⁶
Accordingly, a wise man says that the name Akbar has great meaning,
such as possessing authority and so forth.

AKBAR'S CHILDHOOD

Prospering by the joy of his parents,
he who possessed a beautiful form was delighted

in being followed by the children born of the powerful, royal family
as if he were a second moon followed by the planets.

That bold one played by making some of the princes horses,
others chariots, and others elephants,
some commoners and others ministers.
His splendor was brought out by such play.

Accordingly, the son of the king
became the crown jewel of the wise.
As the moon relinquishes its miniature status on a dark night,
he gave up being a child, he whose play was anything but childlike.

The master of the arts, he reflected all the arts
just as a mirror shows lines of images to the spectators of the world.

In horse riding his skill was precise.
How can I describe how he drove a horse?
Even though a horse was slow and dragging like mud when driven by
another,
it rose like the wind when ridden by him.

He desired to mount a two-tusked, unrestrained elephant with only a
staff.
That crown jewel among great heroes excelled without parallel in men-
tal abilities.
His incomparable hand, with a sharp hook and pillar-like fingernails,
shone like a half-moon that drove away the darkness of pride.³⁷ [v. 50]

Having clung to a lion by its mane, he binds it with only his arms, as if
it were a hare.
When a leopard is to be captured, the slayer of enemies does not trem-
ble, as if the animal were a mere picture.
When animals realize that he is the equal of a male lion, even the lions
become pitiable and find the speed of hyenas.

Whenever the hot-rayed sun and the cool-rayed moon
recall the art of archery complete with Arjuna's roaring,
they think, "How can this be here?"
Then they quickly take cover under the armor of clouds.

On the battlefield his falling sword vanished from its scabbard
and rested in his hand, which is like a sandalwood tree.

Like a striking snake, that sword
severed the life breath of enemy kings.

AKBAR'S CONSECRATION AND VIRTUES

When his father began the journey to heaven Akbar glorified the kingdom,
like when the shining moon sets the sun illuminates the sky.

The glory of the kingdom and the glory of youth shone in him equally,
What young woman does not awaken passion in that lovely man who
enjoys good fortune?

Everyone knows that an ornamented braid
prompts praise from the beautiful-faced preserver.
This creation was perfectly made, like the moon
that Rahu reaches but is not able to grasp.³⁸

Yes, he will become the world ruler!
The creator's palette will draw the fault of old age here!
Having seen his forehead with its eyebrows perfectly curved like the
crescent moon,
a lovely-minded person marvels in his mind.

A playful pair of young deer were stilled
by the trick of seeing his wide smile.
Perpetual ascent and perfection are always in his face.
Does he not outstrip even the unsurpassable moon?

By establishing righteousness and virtue, his tongue
revives sages who were bitten by all kinds of evil snakes.
With such righteousness and virtue, his tongue possesses a stream
of thriving nectar that is beyond the grasp of the new Rahu.

He has no equal among either sugarcane or the entirety of mendicants.
Who could match even just the tip of the sweetness of his speech?
[v. 60]

Pure, nectar-like speech that pleases the ears of wise people
illuminates his face, a veritable pot of nectar.
Perhaps the king of snakes, who as you know bears the earth,
now rules as a man with long arms and a mass of hair.³⁹

In my mind I see his two long arms
as the twin branches of a wishing tree.
Except by standing in his shadow how could kings
have avoided the calamity of his majestic rays?

Rivalling those of a mountain,
I know his pair of shoulders to be lovely.
Because his shoulders are also very broad,
they bear the earth in all directions.

His expansive, firm chest
does not open up but holds a secret mantra.
Nonetheless, with only a glance at the sorrow of another,
his heart melts completely. What explains this contradiction?

His feet are lotuses of superior beauty with straight toes.
They bear auspicious marks such as umbrellas and flags.
The king's feet shine brightly, like a pair of heavenly wishing
trees
that are always sought after by worshippers.

The various other limbs of the world protector
ought to be visible to members of the royal assembly.
Overflowing the earth with a flood of good fortune,
all his limbs are drenched in the nectar of the gods.

AKBAR'S CONQUEST OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

Even though enjoying his father's kingdom,
Akbar desired greater victory in all directions.
There was no restraint in that yearning,
because the son exceeded his father in fame.

Having heard of this king whose arms reached his knees,
adversary rulers trembled with fear.
Even good fortune, which was already manifest in him,
became frenzied and rushed to support him.

The king directed the spread of victory with grand motions.
He advanced, his luck set, in order to traverse the directions.

The lustration of arms was auspicious,
his horses with sharp diadems neighed,

and the royal elephant roared
as the king approached with auspicious signs. [v. 70]

THE EAST

With loads of umbrellas, chowries, and ministers, all pure, praiseworthy,
and shining,
with instruments resounding as if they were bards telling stories of
victory,
with birds such as blue jays⁴⁰ singing the full scale, he went
toward the east, bearing good fortune comparable to that of Indra.

He fearlessly cut and split kings whose forts are weaker.
He guided the lowly feet of the bowed and abolished intolerant rule.
He accepted presents offered up by people from different places.
Glorious King Akbar, the moon of the lineage of Humayun, is victorious.

He scatters the seed of his own splendor on the earth,
which is beaten by the hooves of galloping horses and sprinkled with the
juice of elephants.
Reaching for the pure flowers of heroic fame the lord of the earth, a
fierce sun,
penetrated the eastern regions until the edge of the ocean.

THE SOUTH

Having previously despised powerful kings that are blinded by pride but
to be esteemed,
the king now spoke like a wise man answering an opponent.

Accepting their beautiful gifts
and having established victory over them,
the king went forth dedicated to doing what is right.
Firm in speech, he was invited and welcomed.

If a steady oil lamp is praised by the world,
then how much more is the king praised for his brilliance?
Thus, that lord never worried
about an assault from his people.

A skillful tree on the banks of the Tapi River
revived his horses and elephants with shade,

delighted the infantry with fruit,
and served him with blossoms while he reclined.

As it grows near the side of the Kaveri River,
a palm tree fans the army with stalks lined with leaves,
like a female servant fans with the palms of her hands,
in order to dry the sweat born from toiling on the road.

In southern places he plundered playfully.
He easily established the pillar of victory on Malaya Mountain.

THE WEST

Having amassed immense wealth from the subservient kings there,
the king of kings set out to take the other horizon with his sword. [v. 80]

The illustrious one went west
like the setting sun.
His splendor possessed the dual qualities
of being easy and impossible to bear for enemy rulers.

The women of western kings that were afflicted with sorrow
drew out long sighs that weighed on their hearts.
Among those breaths was the first rising of the fierce wind
that inflamed Akbar, the heroic scorcher.

Western kings, devoid of greatness, downtrodden,
and emasculated like actors who wear women's clothing,
took refuge in the king of kings
who accepted those meek men.

THE NORTH

Like Kubera himself, that lord of wealth
pursued the direction of Kubera's dwellings.
The all-destroying, intensely fierce lord of the earth
broke the pride of the northern kings.

With an imperial order in his hand and knowing the means,
he churned up that region like a stick in a pot of milk.
That famous one seized everything.
He is foremost among those who take wealth by force.

That Indra on earth led his army
to the valley of the Himalayas, king of mountains,
where nearby lands were pervaded with the sweet smell
of perfumed clouds of aloe wood burned by a forest fire.

FATEHPUR SIKRI

Then, having accepted beautiful chowries
as signs of submission and with his goal accomplished,
the lion of kings, whose mark is a four-limbed army,
desired to set out for glorious Sikri.

The land in all directions was overrun by armies
that swelled like the oceanic tide.
The best of kings actively traversed the earth,
whose load is borne by the serpent Shesha.

Thinking, *I who live in this city have conquered
the full circle of the earth with my own two arms,*
Akbar entered the city called "Fatehpur,"
a name given according to the sounds of his own language.

Even his lowly feet were a tribute,
covered with dirt kicked-up by the army,
from the unprotected heads of kings.
Who, having been made great by God,⁴¹ does not achieve greatness? [v. 90]

When he arrived in the city adorned with flags,
the sound of victory quick arose, filling all directions.
Like an exploding star,
that throbbing sound split open the sky.

HOMAGE TO AKBAR AND THE MUGHAL KINGDOM

The mature daughters of kings
across the entire land were given by their fathers.
Akbar even married a woman who was disfigured.
What man, whose body is complete, agrees to this?⁴²

The crowd of kings paid homage
to that one seated on the lion throne
with a chowrie and a royal umbrella over his head,
who looked with his eyes upturned giving thanks.

Khan-i Khanan⁴³ and the other Khans took a vow of firm devotion and turned toward that king like pupils to a teacher.⁴⁴

Akbar, moon of men, surveyed with a pure eye
the gifts of kings who had come from afar.
With a gesture of his eyebrow he gave to those nearby
like a heavenly wishing tree that is drunk with generosity gives to
beggars.

That king established himself on earth among those that govern.
He eliminated the heavy tax
that another king who desired the wealth of others
had placed without restraint upon the indebted earth.

He whose mind wants for nothing, master of the earth,
did not met out punishment even in a dream.
Having exiled evil people who are to be shunned,
he is full of favor to townspeople, as if they were his family.

Just as Kumarapala halted the seizure of the property of the dead
so too did the Lord of Fatehpur halt the collection of taxes.
Just as long ago Arjuna freed cows that were prisoners,
he does likewise now.⁴⁵

He renounces taxes, and his pure fame ascends to the sky.
He exceeds other kings in heroism, listening, and pleasure.
All because the collected wealth of all earthly kings did not surpass
the generous giving upon which his ocean of a mind resolved in a
single day.

This joyful wishing tree who relinquishes taxes
does things excelling his own nature precisely for the sake of all Indians.⁴⁶
Thinking, *how can I become the crown jewel at the head of shahs*,
that wise man, in whom overflowing compassion arises, extends life to
cows. [v. 100]

In the morning calves with their necks free of binding chains, their ears
erect,
and raised up shaking with joy, stretch themselves playfully to suckle.
Their mothers lick them with tongues that are moist with excessive
love.
The earth of glorious Humayun shines with good fortune given Akbar's
immense compassion.

*Even the sun, who steals the luster from all other bodies in the sky,
 spills out his light upon union with the Western horizon.
 What then of men who are slaves of karma on earth?*
 With this thought in mind the king banned liquor, which ought to be
 universally reviled.

*No weapon bearer should bear a weapon before me.
 Desire is an open carrier of weapons
 and has defeated many beings.*
 With these thoughts in mind he threw out the prostitutes.

The rule of this moon of kings is novel,
 which posits the absence of the word “thief.”
 How then does the related term “theft” arise
 in spite of the fact that there are no thieves?

Having merely glimpsed the fierce,
 pride-crushing gaze of that king,
 who appears like the demon Ravana when angry,
 nobody desires the wife of another.

It is customary that the defeated is at the mercy of the winner,
 but this relationship does not work in reverse.
 Being firmly attached to this idea,
 he banned despicable gambling, a scourge on his land.

*The Lord of All, to whom I am second, now
 rules over the worlds with all their living beings.
 He is filled with compassion for all beings.*
 Thinking this the king gave up hunting.

The wisdom among heroes is that weapons are to be abandoned
 due to the sinfulness obtained by bearing arms on earth.
 He sympathized with the thought—*how can I,
 the crest jewel of heroes, slay timid beings?*

Akbar will drive out a bad person
 who was appointed doorkeeper by other kings
 in order to prevent the speech of good people
 from entering into the ruler’s ears.

When this king who enjoys playing in the water
 becomes lustrous after swimming,

fish line up at the edge of Dabara pond and unblinkingly utter praises
to the king—
May you Live Long! Praise to you! May you Be Victorious! Be forever
victorious!⁴⁷ [v. 110]

In consideration of the virtue of Akbar, great moon of the earth,
cruel cranes that have captured fish with their beaks
sympathize, and their hearts fill with wonder.
Even though fish are their only food, the cranes abandon them at once.

When the son of Coli Begum reigns as king there is neither lawlessness
nor plagues.
There is no famine, rebellion, or illness; the rains come at the right time.
Fruit grows on trees during the appropriate season, sweet sugarcane
thrives,
and metal mines give generously—all because of the leader's eye!

Lady, who are you?
I am compassion.
Why are you troubled?
King Kumarapala is gone.
What of it?
*I am banished now day after day by hostile, violent men. I desire to be
reinstated.*
Then, O Pure Compassion, go to the one who possesses the earth.
Now, after a long time, Akbar is the sole king; he will cause you no
distress.

You are delighted to have compassion as your primary goal
as your splendid light is fueled
by the weakened exhalations of
the beautiful-eyed wives of defeated enemies.

The cities of your exiled enemies
go to seed and become covered with grass.
As if jealous of you, your teeth-baring enemies
have become rare.

If wise Rohini had not applied a dark mark in the beginning,
to her husband, the moon, then how could she recognize that lover now
given that the entire world is white with the pure fame
of glorious Humayun's son, ruler of a united empire?

You are lord of the three worlds and teacher of the world!
 You expel violence and other sins!
 In the world people fear you intensely,
 lest they should fail to follow your commands.

Having placed all of his authority in this one man,
 God accomplished his purpose.
 The king, proceeding on foot like a holy man,
 bears this highest burden out of devotion to God.⁴⁸

AKBAR'S SONS

Let Salim, Murad, and glorious Danyal live long!
 The sons of the shah are each like a small image of the king.⁴⁹

Even among these three handsome, good natured sons,
 only the eldest is fit to succeed the king.
 Among the moon, a lamp, and the sun,
 the sun alone possesses the utmost splendor in the world. [v. 120]

AKBAR'S ENCOUNTERS WITH JAIN LEADERS

Out of familiarity one time I, Shanticandra,
 asked the good natured lord of men about compassion.
 I inquired with boldness and wit
 with the blessing of my own glorious teacher, Sakalendu.

Having now seen the best of Indian sages, about which he had heard tell,
 the king eliminated the gap
 between what he had heard and seen.
 The king is by nature an accomplished connoisseur.

On account of a particular virtuous deed of glorious
 Hiravijaya, a Jain leader who is devoted to his followers,
 the king overflowed with compassion and ordered nonviolence toward
 living beings.
 Only an omniscient person understands his virtuous action.⁵⁰

Legions of fish who slipped through nets met with other fish;
 groups of birds who had abandoned their fetters kiss their children;
 the milk-bearing cow, having bathed quickly, goes to her family —
 these are the legacies of that king, the image of kindness.

CLOSING

Since Akbar gave the joy of life to living beings out of generosity,
 he accrued virtue and respect.
 Thus may he, along with his nobles and his sons,
 flourish and live long!

He removed the jizya tax.
 He rescued temples from Mughals who were difficult to restrain.
 He who is compassion embodied broke the chains of prisoners.
 Even base kings hospitably receive the Jains, lords of ascetics.

For six months of the year, beings are born without fear.
 Large groups of cows were born unafraid.
 Among the causes of the arising of such decrees,
 this book was the primary reason.

Having driven out envy, this book,
 called the *Treasury of Compassion*,
 is to be examined, recited, followed,
 and cherished by those who know good conduct.

Thus, the glorious book, the *Treasury of Compassion*, is finished. It was written
 by the great teacher, glorious Shanticandra in order to enlighten glorious Padshah
 Akbar, the king of kings.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion, see Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
2. Respectively, Sir William Jones, "On the Musical Modes of the Hindus: Written in 1784, and Since Much Enlarged," in *The Works of Sir William Jones* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1799), 1:423; and Francis Gladwyn, trans., *Ayeen Akbery or the Institutes of the Emperor Akbar* (London: G. Auld, 1800), 1:102.
3. Wheeler M. Thackston, "Literature," in *The Magnificent Mughals*, ed. Zeenut Ziad (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 84.
4. Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 263.
5. Three authors consecutively failed to translate the *Atharva Veda*. 'Abd al-Qadir Bada'uni, *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*, ed. Captain W. N. Lees and Munshi Ahmad Ali (Calcutta: College Press, 1865), 2:212-13.

6. On Persian translations of Sanskrit texts under the Mughals and other patrons, see N. S. Shukla, "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works," *Indological Studies* 3, nos. 1–2 (1974): 175–91; Carl Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 173–95.
7. The colophon is translated in M. Athar Ali, "Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court," *Social Scientist* 20, nos. 9–10 (1992): 41. The oral vernacular transmission is evident in several features of the translated text, including the forms of certain Sanskrit words and the inclusion of select stories found in oral tellings rather than in the Sanskrit textual tradition.
8. Bada'uni, *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*, 399–400. tells the story of how Akbar challenged part of the *Razmnama* translation.
9. All eighteen books of the translated epic (but not the *Harivamsha*) are included in Sayyid Muhammad Reza Jalali and Dr. N. S. Shukla, eds., *Mahabharata: The Oldest and Longest Sanskrit Epic. Translated by Mir Ghiyasuddin Ali Qazvini Known As Naqib Khan (D. 1023 AH)*, 4 vols. (Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Tavuri, 1979–1981). Nawal Kishore also lithographed several chapters of the *Razmnama* c. 1880–1910.
10. Qamar Adamjee and Audrey Truschke, "Reimagining 'The Idol Temple of Hindustan': Textual and Visual Translation of Sanskrit Texts in Mughal India, in *Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons, and Poets at the Great Islamic Courts*, ed. Amy Landau, 141–65 (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2015).
11. Abu al-Fazl, "Muqaddamah," in *Mahabharata: The Oldest and Longest Sanskrit Epic. Translated by Mir Ghayasuddin Ali Qazvini Known As Naqib Khan (D. 1023 AH) [Razmnama]*, ed. Sayyid Muhammad Reza Jalali and N. S. Shukla (Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Tavuri, 1979–1981), 1:40–41.
12. Abu al-Fazl, "Muqaddamah," 19–20.
13. In contrast, books twelve and thirteen together comprise just under 25 percent of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. James L. Fitzgerald, ed. and trans., *The Mahabharata: Book 11, The Book of the Women, Book 12, The Book of Peace, Part One*, vol. 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 82.
14. Abu al-Fazl, "Muqaddamah," 21.
15. Sukthankar, Vishnu S., S. K. Belvalkar, P. L. Vaidya, et al., eds., *The Mahabharata for the First Time Critically Edited [Mahabharata]* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933–1966), 12:67.
16. Audrey Truschke, "The Mughal Book of War: A Persian Translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 2 (2011): 512–16.
17. To date I have identified seven Sanskrit praise poems dedicated to members of the Mughal ruling elite: Shanticandra's *Kripasakosha* (for Akbar, c. 1587), Rudrakavi's four works (*Danashahacarita* for Danyal in 1603, *Khanakhanacarita* for 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan in 1609, *Jahangiracarita* for Jahangir c. 1610–1620, and *Kirtisamullasa* for Khurram c. 1610–1620), Harideva Misra's *Jahangiravirudavali* (for Jahangir, c. 1605–1627), and Jagannatha Panditaraja's *Asaphavilasa* (for Asaf Khan, c. 1628–1641).
18. Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*, chap. 2.

19. Shanticandra, *Kriparasakosha*, ed. Muni Jinavijaya (Bhavnagar: Shri Jain Atmanand Sabha, 1917; repr., Khambhat: Shri Jain Granthaprakashan Samiti, 1996), 1.
20. Shanticandra, *Kriparasakosha*, verses 126–27. These verses (and verse 128) are missing in ms. Ahmedabad LD Institute of Indology, No. 11878.
21. Devavimalagani, *Hirasaubhagya*, ed. Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sivadatta and Kashinath Pandurang Parab (Bombay: Tukaram Javaji, 1900), 14.271.
22. I retain the *Razmnama*'s spelling of Sanskrit words as transliterated into Persian (without diacritics) with only minor adjustments for consistency and clarity.
23. Here I translate the phrase *khudavand-i ta'alá*. Similar phrases occur several more times in this passage, sometimes with other names for God (for example, *haqq*).
24. The Persian transliterates the Sanskrit term *devata*.
25. *Haqq subhana wa ta'alá*.
26. The first four lines are from the *Bustan-i Sa'di*, ed. Nur Allah Iranparast (Tehran: Danish, 1973), 18, lines 4–5. I am unclear about the origin of the last two lines.
27. Shanticandra uses lightly Sanskritized versions of the names of the Mughal kings (for example, *akabara/akavara* for Akbar). However, like many Sanskrit writers, he infrequently employs proper names, and so I have occasionally added them in my translation for clarity. I have not retained diacritics for Persian terms transliterated into Sanskrit.
28. I have added subtitles throughout the translation for ease of reading and navigation.
29. Literally, “like an amalaka fruit in one’s hand.”
30. Read *asphuta* in first line, in accordance with the 1996 edition of the *Kriparasakosha*. I am not fully certain of the sense of this verse, although it appears to be some sort of *nindastuti* (praise by blame). Judging from the nonclarifying changes made in the 1996 edition of the *Kriparasakosha*, the editor is similarly uncertain.
31. *barbaro mudgaladhipah*.
32. In modern scholarship, Akbar’s mother is more commonly named as Hamida Banu Begum. She is also named as Coli Begam (or Begum) by Antoni Montserrat, a Jesuit visitor to Akbar’s court at around the same time as Shanticandra, and in other Sanskrit sources. Antoni Montserrat, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S. J., on His Journey to the Court of Akbar*, trans. John S. Hoyland and S. N. Banerjee (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1922), ix; *Epigraphia Indica* (Calcutta/Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1892–), 2:55, verse 34. *Coli* refers to the queen’s wanderings in the desert (*chul* in Persian) after Humayun was ousted from his throne.
33. The use of light imagery is well attested within Sanskrit literature. This passage also may serve as a subtle reference to the story of Akbar’s Mongol ancestor Alanquva who conceived triplet sons through a beam of divine light. According to Abu al-Fazl, the divine light was passed on in a latent form through the generations until it manifested itself visibly in Akbar. Abu’l Fazl, *The History of Akbar*, ed. and trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 1:43–45.
34. Pregnancy cravings (*dohadas*) are a recurrent theme in Sanskrit literature and frequently augur the birth of a great man.
35. This verse plays off the Jain dedication to avoiding harm to all forms of life.

36. *B* and *v* are often used interchangeably in early modern Sanskrit.
37. There is a slight break in the Sanskrit text at the end of this verse, and so my interpretation remains tentative and incomplete.
38. Rahu is the demon responsible for causing eclipses by periodically swallowing the sun and moon.
39. Here Akbar is compared to Shesha, who supports the earth.
40. Blue jays are a good omen.
41. Shanticandra uses *isvara* for God.
42. I am unsure what to make of the claim that Akbar married a marred or disfigured woman, but Shanticandra lauds this decision as admirable.
43. *Khanakhana* in Sanskrit is 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, an important general and cultural figure under Akbar and Jahangir.
44. This line probably refers to the *din-i ilahi* (more properly known as the *tawhid-i ilahi*), Akbar's discipleship program.
45. Kumarapala was a twelfth-century Chaulukya King who converted to Jainism under the guidance of Hemacandra and is much revered in the Jain tradition.
46. I translate *hindubhyah* as Indians here. The word *hindu* was originally a Perso-Arabic term and was used in Sanskrit from the fourteenth century onward. The term sometimes meant Hindus specifically, but it perhaps more commonly meant all non-Muslim Indians.
47. Akbar prohibited fishing in Dabara pond (also known as Damara pond), which was located near Fatehpur Sikri. Several Jain sources mention this royal order, which advanced the Jain principle of avoiding harm to all forms of life, including Padmasagara, *Jagadgurukavya*, ed. Hargovinddas and Becardas (Benares: Harakhchand Bhurabhai, 1910), verses 182 and 185 and *Hirasaubhagya* 14.195. In the commentary on the *Hirasaubhagya*, Devavimala credits Shanticandra with convincing Akbar to ban fishing in the pond.
48. I translate *isha* as God.
49. The sons names are given as follows in Sanskrit: Seshuji (shaykhuji in Persian, Akbar's nickname for Prince Salim who later became Emperor Jahangir), Pahadi (a nickname for Murad), and Daniara for Danyal.
50. This verse refers to the series of royal orders (*farmans*) that were solicited by Hiravijaya, the leader of the Tapa Gaccha branch of Jainism, upon his first sojourn to the Mughal court in the mid-1580s. The next verse alludes to some of these concessions.

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FIGURE 10.1 *Entrée du Medreseh Chah-Sultan-Hussein, Ispahan*
Sketch of Madrasa-yi Sultani in Isfahan, Iran, in the mid-nineteenth century.

Artist: Pascal Coste

Date: 1851–54.

Place of origin: Paris, France

Credit: New York Public Library Digital Collections

10. Royal Patronage: A College, Poets, and the Making of an Imperial Secretary

The relative stability and economic prosperity of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries permitted powerful members of the three courts to patronize and promote various branches of the arts and learning. The essays in this chapter illustrate how this activity was carried out within a wider historical context of Muslim kingship and the role of patronage in its early modern manifestations. In the first essay, Maryam Moazzen provides a sketch of the Safavid promotion of the religious sciences through the examination of the endowment deeds (*waqfiyyas*) of a major madrasa (a seminary college) in the Safavid capital of Isfahan. The deed under analysis belongs to Madrasa-yi Sultani, the largest seminary built toward the end of the Safavid period. By analyzing the endowment deeds of the Royal college, Moazzen sheds light on the mechanism and structure of organizing a major Shi'i educational and charitable institution. The motivations expressed and implied in its establishment, and the branches of knowledge that were taught and debated, point to the Safavid state's direct influence on the college. Moreover, the religious orientation that this royal seminary college adopted, and the beneficiaries (students and scholars) that its large endowment supported, were guided by its patrons' particular attitude toward learning, and in turn helped shape a religious community's outlook in eighteenth-century Isfahan.

In the second essay, Murat Umut Inan examines the Ottoman patronage of literateurs by analyzing three major biographies of poets (*tezkires*) compiled respectively by such sixteenth-century Ottoman luminaries as Sehi Bey (d. 1548), Latifi (d. 1582), and Aşık Çelebi (d. 1572). By doing so, Inan provides the contours and

contexts of literary patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a period during which literary production increased significantly, mainly due to the Ottoman sultans' and the ruling elite's lavish support. As he explains, there were two interrelated reasons for the continued interest in and support for literary creation in this period. First, literature, and especially poetry, enjoyed great popularity among members of the court and elite households, most of whom were avid readers of poetry, and others were skilled poets in their own right. This enthusiasm in turn led to a dramatic rise in patronage of literature. Another reason literary figures and works were continuously and generously funded had much to do with the Ottoman imperial project to create a literary culture that would represent a powerful empire that presented itself as the new heir to, and patron of, the Islamic literary tradition. The *tezkires* translated here provide a wealth of anecdotal, biographical, and historical information that shed light on the forms as well as the workings of the Ottoman patronage of literature in the early modern era.

In the third essay, Rajeev Kinra examines a letter of advice from a high-ranking Mughal bureaucrat to his offspring regarding education, ethics, and cultural refinement. The letter was composed in Persian by the Mughal poet and state secretary (*munshi*), Chandar Bhan Brahman (d. c. 1670), and addressed to his son Tej Bhan (dates unknown). As their names indicate, Chandar Bhan and Tej Bhan were both high-caste Hindus, but they were nevertheless deeply immersed in Mughal court culture and the broader cosmopolitan literary and political culture of the Indo-Persian world. Drawing on the deep traditions of Indo-Persian treatises on worldly "advice" (*nasihat*), Chandar Bhan counsels his son on a variety of topics related to the life of a Mughal courtier, especially the life of a successful imperial *munshi*.

One of the significant themes that runs through the letter (and Chandar Bhan's *oeuvre* more generally) is the importance of leading a "balanced" life (*i'tidal*). He advises Tej Bhan to pursue knowledge, but to privilege the pursuit of practical knowledge from a range of disciplines including history, literature, ethics, statecraft, and accounting over merely abstract or theoretical knowledge. He encourages him to lead a life of piety and devotion (significantly, without specifying any particular sect or deity) and to aspire to the ascetic ideals of "nonattachment" (*bi-ta'alluqi*) common to the mystical dimensions of both Hinduism and Islam, even as he acknowledges that for most people the practical realities of living in the world require a commitment to work, family, and the society of others.

In short, the letter offers a fascinating window onto the values of mystical civility, pluralism, a strong work ethic, and a respect for learning held dear by the seventeenth-century Mughal intelligentsia. It also presents us with a useful "syllabus" of sorts for the kinds of texts, authors, and genres that an educated Mughal gentleman would consider to be essential reading for the cultivation of good character.

I. The Leading Religious College in Early Modern Iran

MADRASA-YI SULTANI AND ITS ENDOWMENT

MARYAM MOAZZEN

Ten years after his coronation, Shah Sultan Husayn (d. 1722), who had assumed power August 6, 1694, at the age of twenty-six, commissioned the construction of the Madrasa-yi Sultani. The madrasa was also known as Madrasa-yi Madar-i Shah (The College of the Queen Mother) and Madrasa-yi Chahar Bagh (The College of the Four Gardens). It is currently called Imam Ja'far-i Sadiq Seminary (*Hawza*) (in honor of the sixth Shi'i imam). However, the name given in the madrasa's deeds of endowment (*waqf-namas*) is Madrasa-yi Sultani (the Royal Religious College).¹ It is the largest of its kind in Iran apart from the Madrasa-yi Ghiyathiyya at Khargird, which was built between 1438 and 1444.

The construction of the Madrasa-yi Sultani began in 1704. The shah ordered eunuch Aqa Kamal, the treasurer of the royal court (*sahib jam'i khazana*), to supervise its construction.² According to the college's endowment deed (*waqf-nama*) dated 1706, part of which is translated below, Shah Sultan Husayn endowed the entire madrasa-mosque complex, its dome, *aiwan* (also spelled *ivan* or *iwan*), and courtyard for the benefit of all Shi'a Muslims. He dedicated the chambers around its courtyard as well as buildings, reservoirs, a well, a kitchen, and the rest of the madrasa structure to the students of religious sciences and to the people who prayed in the mosque of the madrasa.³ 'Abd al-Husayn Khatunabadi reports that "Shah Sultan Husayn set about building the Royal Madrasa in the Chahar Bagh district in Isfahan in 1704 and its construction was completed in 1707."⁴ Nonetheless, various completion dates are mentioned in epigraphs at different places in the madrasa. The entrance gate mentions the year 1711, whereas inside the madrasa

is written 1708. The madrasa's chambers also mention the year 1708, whereas the dome says 1711. Finally, the dome's inscriptions contain the year 1714 and the madrasa's veranda mentions 1709. Therefore, we may assume that the madrasa was built over the span of ten years, from 1704 to 1714. Some historians say the building is a mosque that has rooms for students. In the words of Muhammad Mahdi b. Muhammad Rida Isfahani: "The entire mosque is a madrasa."⁵ That said, all other primary sources refer to this complex as a madrasa.

In his *Ganjinah-yi athar-i tarikhi-i Isfahan*, Lutfallah Hunarfar states that Shah Sultan Husayn's mother built a three-story caravanserai, which was known as Sara-yi Fathiyya (in recent decades, Hotel 'Abbasi was built in its place), alongside the madrasa, as well as a market called Bazar-i Buland (currently known as Bazar-i Hunar, with a thousand two-story shops) that donated their revenues to the madrasa-mosque complex.⁶ 'Abd al-Husayn Sipinta also attributes the construction of the madrasa to the shah's mother and says that Shah Sultan Husayn only repaired it.⁷ Historical and biographical sources, however, do not provide much information about her, and in the endowment deed Shah Sultan Husayn is named as the sole patron of the madrasa.

In addition to the aforesaid properties, between 1709 and 1714 Shah Sultan Husayn donated vast agricultural lands and urban properties to support the madrasa's professor and students and to pay for the upkeep of the buildings and the religious activities stipulated by the terms of the endowment. The shah gifted several buildings, including a coffeehouse (*qahwa-khana*), public bathhouses, reservoirs, and subterranean canals. He created the post of *wazir-i Halal*, a royal official, whose sole responsibility was to oversee the properties dedicated to the Madrasa-yi Sultani and other charitable endowments he had founded.⁸

The Madrasa-yi Sultani is about 8,500 square meters. The length of its courtyard is about 65.5 meters, and its width is 55.5 meters. Its facade, dome, and minarets are adorned with tiled mosaics, and the architectural features and interior decoration are great examples of Islamic geometric art. The entrance portal, decorated with gold facade and silver, and the tile works inside the madrasa are masterpieces of prime workmanship. Shah Sultan-Husayn ordered 'Abd al-Latif of Tabriz, the goldsmith of the royal household, to create the door.⁹ No expense seems to have been spared for this later addition, completed in 1714. The doors were made of twenty *mans* of silver, and the contemporary Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Khatunabadi reports that the sum of eight hundred *tumans* was spent on the main door of the madrasa alone—an enormous sum.¹⁰ On the day of their installment, the city was illumined with lights.

The students' rooms were built around the large rectangular courtyard, interrupted only by the deeply recessed double-height *aywans* in the center of each wall. The Madrasa-yi Sultani has 150 chambers. Some sources give different numbers for the rooms: Muhammad Zaman Tabrizi reports that it contains 156 rooms furnished for students.¹¹ The madrasa's floor plan, however, shows only 150 chambers. A special room located north of the portal was prepared for the personal use of

Shah Sultan Husayn.¹² Although Mir Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi (d. 1715), the madrasa's first professor, began teaching there in 1706–7, Madrasa-yi Sultani was not inaugurated until 1710.

THE ENDOWMENT DEEDS OF THE MADRASA-YI SULTANI

Although all but one of the original *waqf-namas* of the Madrasa-yi Sultani are lost, copies of several of the madrasa's endowment deeds enable us to determine the extent of its endowed properties (*mawqufat*). Muhammad Nadir Nasiri Muqaddam published a *waqf-nama* of the madrasa dated 1709.¹³ The original text of this *waqf-nama* is housed in the Iran-i Bastan Museum.¹⁴ Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhuh, who had seen the document, described it as follows: "Waqf-nama number 8549, held in the Ancient Iran Museum, was written by the calligrapher Mirza Ahmad Nayrizi in 1720 on European paper and its title is written in gold. It is lavishly decorated with brilliant colour."¹⁵ Abd al-Husayn Sipinta published the deeds of endowment of Madrasa-yi Sultani based on copies of the originals.¹⁶ The current research is based on copies of the *waqf-namas*, kept in the *Idara-yi awqaf-i Isfahan*, and Sipinta's edition.

The deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sultani provide a wealth of information about the way this major religious and cultural institution was managed and how its resources were put to use. As stated in the deeds of endowment, the shah's purpose in establishing the Madrasa-yi Sultani was "to disseminate the seeds of good words" and also for the Shi'a and the faithful "to benefit from this pious foundation, so that they would pray for the survival and longevity of the shah's rule."¹⁷ Moreover, in the deeds of the madrasa, *waqf* is emphasized as an exchange and an investment that would bear abundant returns, which could be repaid either here and now or in the hereafter. In the *waqf-namas*, anticipation of divine returns—especially as the result of the prayers of the poor, given in return for charities—is expressed in frequent statements.¹⁸ One group of beneficiaries of this pious endowment included fourteen Qur'an reciters who were stipulated to beseech God's favor for the shah and to be advocates for his personal quest for salvation while performing their prayers.¹⁹ Aware of the essential role of the *waqf* institution in promoting religio-cultural and educational and social welfare, Shah Sultan Husayn made use of *waqf* as a mechanism to foster socio-religious and spiritual cohesion in addition to projecting a pious image of himself. As the deeds of endowment reveal, Shah Sultan Husayn assigned a part of the revenues of the Madrasa-yi Sultani's *waqfs* to people visiting the shrines of the imams and sponsoring other pious activities. In the *waqf-nama* issued in 1711, Shah Sultan Husayn stipulates that "the sum of twelve Tabrizi tumans was to be given either to four Twelver Shi'is wanting to visit the holy shrines of the Imams in Iraq but without the financial means to do so, or to the people who already visited the shrines, but who were in debt due to

this journey and who did not have the money to return home.”²⁰ He also made use of the waqf institution’s symbolic value to create bureaucratic links between his own temporal power and religious authority. The establishment of a large madrasa would also be deemed a symbol of the prosperity of his realm as well as his leadership skills.²¹

With regard to format, Madrasa-yi Sultani’s deeds of endowment have the principal elements of similar documents. All waqf-namas of the Madrasa-yi Sultani include the following elements: *basmala*, *Hamdala* (Praise to God), *tasliyya* (the prayer upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family), and identification of the donor.²² The *waqif* acknowledges that the world is just a hospice and a bridge to the hereafter. He states that when a man dies he survives through his pious deeds because he establishes this pious endowment, which gives eternal profit and acts as a memorial that survives him.²³ Before enumerating and describing the endowed properties, the document’s lawfulness is accounted for. The donor declares he has the full right of disposal over properties, and that right is followed by a statement of stipulations inherent to a waqf as well as an admonition against changing them.²⁴

Waqf-namas of the madrasa then offer a general description of the properties, which were assigned in perpetuity. The expenses, wages, personnel, property management, and administration system of the madrasa itself, however, are outlined in much greater detail. Afterward, there are descriptions of the beneficiaries and pious purposes for which the income of the waqf is to be spent. The administrator of the endowment is named as well as who should replace him upon his death. To safeguard his charitable foundation, Shah Sultan Husayn encouraged the managerial team to faithfully follow the stipulations that he had set down. I could not obtain access to ledgers or books belonging to the endowments, so it is not possible to discuss any possible maladministration. He also outlined a set of guidelines for future fiduciaries. The documents close with an invocation and the date of the deed.²⁵

The elements do not always appear in exactly the same order in all deeds of the madrasa. The deeds typically bear the names of the people who have confirmed the provenance of the endowed properties and Shah Sultan Husayn’s seal. One can safely assume that the witnesses are the most ceremonially important religious figures of their time. The following marginal note by Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi, the first professor of the madrasa, is typical of the witnesses’ statement in these endowment deeds:

Praise be to God who donated the bounty of the next world to whoever cultivates the seeds of goodness and justice in the farm of this world and waters its garden with the charities running from the spring of good fortune! May the integrity of reason and prayer and peace be upon the master of the school of the cosmos and the teacher of the book of creation—the Prophet Muhammad and his family—and upon the noble imams undertaking the duties of teaching and guiding and may the salvation on the Day of resurrection depend on their intercession! . . . I complied with his [Shah Sultan Husayn’s] order and carried out as his proxy His Majesty, the donor. ²⁶

In addition to the thousand-two shop bazaar, agricultural properties of various kinds including arable fields, hamlets, gardens, irrigation canals, and water shares constituted the majority of the endowed properties. Some of these properties are large, and others are only a few shares (*sahms*) in the property.²⁷ The Madrasa-yi Sultani's deeds of endowment provide detailed data on the expenses, wages, personnel, property management, and administrative structure of this religious higher learning institution. The deeds describe the qualifications and duties expected of principal staff including the trustee (*mutawalli*), the supervisor (*nazir*) and his overseers (*mubashirin*), the professor of the madrasa, and the accountant (*mustawfi*). It gives details about their salaries and other material benefits. The trustee was responsible for maintaining and preserving waqf goals and for the pious endowment's prosperous utilization.²⁸ To secure the survival of his waqf, Shah Sultan Husayn established a perpetual succession of trustees. He set down the condition that upon his death the reigning ruler of every age must act as the trustee.²⁹ In the deed written August 29, 1711, we read: "His Majesty, the donor Shah—may God protect him from the dreads of Resurrection Day—reserves the trusteeship of the aforementioned endowment to himself as long as the world is illuminated by his radiant light and after himself to the one who is the reigning king of Iran."³⁰

The endowment deed for the Madrasa-yi Sultani also stipulates the salaries and duties of the madrasa's personnel, including the head servants (*khadim-bashi* or *sarkar-i 'amala-yi madrasa*), a storehouse-man (*tahwildar*), eight servants, two lamp-men, three custodians (*farrash*), three doormen, two water-carriers, and a gardener. The document spells out how the *khadim-bashi* has to be present at the madrasa most of or all day and has to make every effort to keep it clean and well organized for the use of students. He was instructed to make sure that workers are doing their best, neither cheating nor doing wicked acts. For this service, he is not to receive any other money from the royal court.³¹ According to the *waqfiyya* written in 1711, the sum of twenty-nine tumans was to be spent on illuminating the mosque, prayer courtyard, teaching hall, corridors of the upper-storey rooms, the madrasa's entrance, and other places that students would come and go and need to be lit. The lamps of the madrasa and mosque were to be lit by sheep fat and other materials considered suitable.³²

In addition to all these personnel whose main duties were to keep the madrasa-mosque complex clean and in good order, the fees of a librarian, four muezzins, and fourteen Qur'an reciters are provided for in the deed of endowment. The madrasa librarian was in charge of receiving books, cataloging them, and putting them in their appropriate places. By the terms of the *waqfiyya*, the librarian—who was appointed by the trustee to handle the donated books—was supposed to spend most of his time at the madrasa so students could borrow the donated books. He also kept track and took care of them to prevent any loss or damage.³³ The librarian would receive the sum of seven tumans annually. He may lend books to the students based on the stipulations mentioned at the back of each donated book.³⁴ The

following is a sample of the notes written at the back of donated books. At the back of Mulla Sadra's *Sharh-i Hidayat al-Hikma*, one of the books donated to the library of the Madrasa-yi Sultani and currently kept at the library of the Gowhar Shad Mosque in Mashhad, no. 1363, is this note:

This least of all servants of God, donates this manuscript to all Shi'a who seek religious sciences and I assign myself as its mutavalli and upon my death I leave it to the care of the mutavalli of the Madrasa-yi Sultani, and I legally stipulate that whoever needs this volume, should obtain it from the professor of the madrasa and do not keep it longer than six months and return it to the professor of the madrasa [at the end of six months], and whenever he needs to keep it for more than six months, he may keep the book by asking the professor of the madrasa. He must not take the book out of Isfahan. Whoever changes this deed, may Prophet Muhammad foredoom and damn him!³⁵

The deed of endowment of the library of the Madrasa-yi Sultani, currently kept in the Ayatullah Mar'ashi Library, no. 9607, reads:

All the books endowed to the madrasa's library must be recorded and submitted to the librarian of the madrasa and when any of students needs a book, after obtaining a permission of the madrasa's professor, he can keep the book as long as he needs to benefit from it. He should not keep it longer than needed. If any of the non-residence Shi'is needs any books, they also [can borrow books] after obtaining a permission of the madrasa's professor as well as a receipt containing the seal of the professor [of the madrasa] and then may go to the librarian and leave the receipt with the librarian and then borrow the book and keep it as long as he needs it. He must not take the book outside of Isfahan. If the professor doesn't trust him, he may ask for [a] deposit and then give him the book.

If anybody wants to take along any books during his visitation of the shrines of the imams, he may take the book outside of Isfahan after obtaining a receipt containing the seal of the professor of the madrasa and upon his return from his pilgrimage he must return the book to the librarian of the madrasa. He must do his best to keep the book safe from getting ruined or damaged. As long as he is in Isfahan, he must return the book(s) to the professor of the madrasa so that he is certain that the book is in good shape and then if he needs it again, he may ask the professor to lend the book to him again.

The professor of the madrasa must do his best to safeguard all the books as well as to provide the needs of students and whoever from the Shi'a need any books kept in the library of the madrasa. His Excellency, the donor, stipulates legally that books donated to the madrasa must not be bought, sold, and given as gifts or pawned and also must not be exposed to perishing and relocation! Borrowers must also not keep the books longer than needed and do not leave them idle. When the people of knowledge study them, they should remember the shah, the donor, and pray for him during their prayers remember the shah, the donor, and pray for him.³⁶

Shah Sultan Husayn generously supported students. Students not only enjoyed a free education but also were given substantial monthly stipends. The teacher

of the Royal Madrasa was to choose ideal students who possessed fine natural dispositions, intelligence, and discernment, and who could occupy themselves with benefiting from the madrasa's opportunities and by being beneficial to others after the termination of their stay at the madrasa. The professor, who was in charge of distributing students' stipends, had to divide the sum of 528 Tabrizi tumans from the remaining 8.5 percent of the revenues among the madrasa's chambers. The deed reads:

His Excellency, the successful donor, the absolute ruler on the face of the earth, in the deed of the endowment lawfully made the condition that the residents of the auspicious madrasa who receive stipends must be pious Twelver Shi'is—may God increase their numbers. They must possess the right faith, and observe religious rituals and live in the madrasa in accordance with the norms and customs of the day. The madrasa's teacher must assign them to the madrasa's rooms and if any student does not possess the desirable features and other conditions stipulated by the trustee of every age, and if the teacher does not deem his being in the madrasa advisable, the teacher must expel him and house someone who possesses the itemized characteristics in his place and give him the stipend. The students must not be corrupt or wicked. If the teacher feels there is a need to have a student act as the head-student, he can choose one of the students and give him an extra 100 *dinars* daily to do whatever is required from a head-student.³⁷

Students and personnel of the Madrasa-yi Sultani received medical care. In a deed written in 1711, Shah Sultan Husayn donates the revenues of a village to students of the Madrasa-yi Sultani and whoever needs medical attention. In the deed we are told that whenever one of the students, Qur'an reciters, madrasa servants, or staff, or anyone else goes to the madrasa from the Twelver-Shi'is seeking medicine and medical attention, they should be treated and fed. They were to be given whatever they need by way of medicine, food, fruit, or medical attention. If they need a nurse, they would be provided with a male or female nurse. The teacher was instructed to sign and stamp all the receipts. If some funds remained, they were to be given to a hospital next to the Qaysariyya and the 'Abbasabad hospitals.³⁸ According to the deed, the teacher's signature was necessary for these expenditures.³⁹

In a *waqfiyya* written in 1712, Shah Sultan Husayn donates the revenues of a whole village and the shares of five other villages to be spent on purchasing charcoal to be divided among the chambers of the madrasa for use in winter and other times that the teacher deems appropriate. If crops and revenues of the properties' leave a surplus after the price of charcoal, the extra money was to be spent on purchasing animal oil or firewood, whichever seems more useful for the residents. The animal fat was supposed to be divided among the chambers of the madrasa for lighting the rooms in the same way that the charcoal was distributed. If the teacher decided to buy firewood, it was supposed to be given to the *tahwildar* of the madrasa for distribution to the residents who need it for cooking.⁴⁰ They were expected not

to leave their rooms idle and were always to be present at the madrasa and keep themselves busy with acquiring religious sciences.⁴¹

Like all other Shi'i patrons of religious institutions, Shah Sultan Husayn paid special attention to holy dates in the Shi'i calendar as well as to the month-long holy period of Ramadan. Every evening during Ramadan was a celebration. Students residing in the madrasa alongside forty-one poor and needy fasting Twelver-Shi'is enjoyed the evening meal for breaking the fast (*iftar*), whether they were students or nonstudents (whether sayyid or not), women or men, married women or widows. Shah Sultan Husayn stipulated that "the sum of two hundred ninety-six *riyals* and one tenth of a *riyal* was to be spent on providing meals every night of the month of Ramadan"⁴² and ordered the following:

The meal must consist of bread, cheese, sweet paste (*halwa*), dates, and sherbet. Breads must be round and small and dates must be black or similar to the dates produced in Medina. Dates must be seeded and stuffed with almonds and the like. In preparing *halwa*, fine oil and flour and sugar must be used to sweeten it and honey and syrup of grapes must not be used [to sweeten it], and if they want to make *halwa* from starch, they must add saffron. Sherbet must be made with sugar, willow-water, and sweet basil seeds and in seasons when good ice is around, it must be added to sherbet. The nights of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first of Ramadan are the time of mourning [the martyrdom of 'Ali] so they should exclude *halwa*, sherbet, and dates [from the menu] and instead of those [sweet foods] they must make meals that are not sweet. The cost of these substitute foods must be approximately one hundred *dinars*.⁴³

The *mutawalli* must give the sum of twelve Tabrizi tumans to one of the religious scholars so that he will distribute that money in the month of Ramadan among the needy fasting Shi'is. Each should receive two hundred *dinars* with which to break his fast.⁴⁴

Although the deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sultani do not fully list the books that should be studied, they are valuable for revealing the subjects, which were sponsored by the last effective Safavid monarch, because they reveal the nature of the dominant discourse at the turn of the eighteenth century in Iran. These documents not only reveal that the donor (*waqif*) was concerned with making sure his madrasa would continue operating, but they also outline the general content of the curriculum. In the deeds of endowment of his madrasa, Shah Sultan Husayn stipulated that the teacher must teach only religious sciences and should exclude rational sciences and *Hikmat* (philosophy) from the curriculum. The deed reads:

And the sum of fifty Tabrizi tumans as teaching fee should be paid to the professor of the madrasa appointed by the trustee of the madrasa. The professor must be present during the teaching days established for the madrasa, and he should occupy himself with teaching and discussing religious sciences including prophetic tradition as well as sayings of the imams, Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, principles of religion as sources and theories of law as well

as their ancillary sciences including Arabic language, syntax, morphology, logic, and all other sciences that their teaching and learning are lawfully permitted. He should teach them to the extent that is necessary and customary. At least one of his courses should be on one of the celebrated hadith books. He should avoid discussing and teaching philosophical and Sufi works. He must do his best to make students focus on their studies and discussions and ensure that students advance further in their studies and also guarantee that the revenues of the endowments spend property according to the waqf stipulations.⁴⁵

In the diploma marking the appointment of Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi, Shah Sultan Husayn also ordered that the professor of the Madrasa-yi Sultani “must only teach religious sciences and transmit prophetic hadiths and imami *khbars*. He must avoid teaching rational sciences (*‘ulum-i ‘aqli*) and philosophy.”⁴⁶ Statements like these indicate the concern of the ruling elites with maintaining the religious orientation of the madrasa curriculum and also demonstrate the significant role played by donors (*waqifs*) with respect to the curriculum. *Waqifs* also exercised their influence through the appointment or discharge of professors. Thus the content of the curriculum was a consequence of the close association between the ruling authorities and educational activities.

Madrasa-yi Sultani, along with other madrasas built by some members of the Safavid household and wealthy individuals, set the official direction in higher learning; they did not, however, monopolize education in Safavid Isfahan. As in all Islamic societies, education was tied to individual scholars who transmitted texts to students in a variety of places. Some scholars avoided the court and shunned teaching in madrasas altogether, establishing their own teaching circles. One example is the teaching circle of Muhsin Fayz in Kashan.⁴⁷ Some madrasa teachers even taught subjects that were excluded from the curriculum of the madrasa in which they were appointed to teach. For example ‘Abd al-Nabi Qazwini reports that Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi, the teacher of the Madrasa-yi Sultani, taught *Sharh-i Isharat*. He does not mention where these teaching sessions were held or which commentary on Ibn Sina’s *Isharat wa al-tanbihat* was taught.⁴⁸ The deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-yi Sultani reflect the Safavid court’s opposition to philosophical enquiry during the final decades of Safavid rule. Shah Sultan Husayn and his aunt, Maryam Begum, as well as many other founders of madrasas of early modern Iran banned philosophical studies in the educational institutions under their patronage in favor of a concentration on hadith, *fiqh*, and Qur’anic sciences.⁴⁹

NOTES

1. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan* (Isfahan: Intisharat-i Idara-yi Kull-i Awqaf, Mantaqa-yi Isfahan, 1967), 150, 160ff.
2. Aqa Kamal himself built a madrasa in Isfahan in 1695 and named it after Shah Sultan Husayn. For more on this madrasa, see Rasul Ja’farian, “Waqf-nama-yi Sultan Husayniyya ma’ruf bi-Madrasa-yi Aqa Kamal,” in *Mirath-i Islami-i Iran* 1: 259–90.

3. Muhammad Nadir Nasiri Muqaddam, "Waqf-nama-yi Madrasa-yi Chahar-bagh-i Isfahan," *Waqf: Mirath-i jawidan* 2, no. 4 (1998): 112–18; Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 149–50.
4. 'Abd al-Husayn Khatunabadi, *Waqayi' al-sinin wa al-a'wam*, ed. M. Bihbudi (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Islamiyya, 1973), 556.
5. See Muhammad Mahdi b. Muhammad Rida Isfahani, *Nisf-i jahan fi ta'rif-i Isfahan*, ed. Manuchihr Sutudeh (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1989), 69.
6. Lutfullah Hunarfar, *Ganjina-yi athar-i tarikhi Isfahan* (Tehran: Chapkhana-yi Ziba, 1971), 722.
7. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 116.
8. Yusuf Rahimlu, ed., *Alqab wa mawajib-i dawra-yi safawi* (1371; repr., Mashhad: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Firdawsi Mashhad, 1992), 66.
9. Hunarfar, *Ganjina-yi athar-i tarikhi-i Isfahan*, 691–94; Abu al-Qasim Rafi'i Mehrabadi, *Athar-i milli-yi Isfahan* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Athar-i Milli, 1974), 446–50; Blake, *Half the World*, 160.
10. Khatunabadi, *Waqayi' al-sinin wa al-a'wam*, 560.
11. Muhammad Zaman Tabrizi, *Fara'id al-fawa'id fi ahwal madaris wa masajid*, ed. Rasul Ja'fariyan (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Mirath-i Maktub, wabasta bi-Mu'awanat-i Umur-i Farhangi wa Irshad-i Islami, Ihya'-i Kitab, 1994), 291.
12. Hunarfar, *Ganjina-yi athar-i tarikhi-i Isfahan*, 719–20.
13. Nasiri Muqaddam, "Waqf-nama-yi Madrasa-yi Chahar Bagh," 112–18.
14. There is a microfilm of this *waqf-nama* in the Kitabkhana-yi Markazi-i Danishgah-i Tihiran under number 1735.
15. Cited in Nasiri Muqaddam, "Waqf-nama-yi Madrasa-yi Chahar Bagh," 113.
16. See Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 120–228.
17. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 125.
18. See, for example, Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 145.
19. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 125.
20. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 199. In two other *waqfiyyas* issued in 1711, Shah Sultan Husayn also set down that every year the sum of forty Tabrizi tumans from the revenues of 1,197 shares of the Josharan garden were to be given to three pious individuals as described above to perform *hajj* and visit the holy cities of Iraq and the shrine of Imam Rida at Mashhad on behalf of Shah Safi. Also in another *waqfiyya* of the same date, Shah Sultan Husayn orders that the same amount of money from the revenues of eleven of the twelve shares of the Garden of Sa'adat-abad and other parcels of land had to be given to three pious individuals to perform *hajj* and visit the holy cities of Iraq and the shrine of Imam Rida at Mashad on behalf of Shah 'Abbas II. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 229–35; 243–50. In another *waqfiyya* issued in 1711, Shah Sultan Husayn donated the revenues from a few parcels of land to a group of Twelver-Shi'is residing in Najaf so that each would receive a minimum of three Tabrizi tumans to a maximum of five. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 210.
21. For this aspect of waqf, see Richard van Leeuwen, *Waqfs and Urban Structures: The Case of Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1–33, 178–203.

22. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 144.
23. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 145.
24. He stipulated that no endowed properties could be sold, transferred under inheritance, or misappropriated during his life or after death. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf*, 149–50, 175.
25. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 177.
26. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 203, Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi's note, which is written in Arabic, ends with his prayers and well wishes for the shah and for the continuity of his kingship.
27. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 156–57ff.
28. For a detail description of the duties of trustees, see R. D. McClesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480–1889* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3ff.
29. Dilaram Khanum also stipulated that upon her death the reigning monarch of each age would hold the trusteeship of her endowments. Nuzhat Ahmadi, "Chahar waqf-nama az chahar madrasa-yi Isfahan dar dawra-yi safawi," in Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Mirath-i islami-i Iran* 3: 103.
30. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 130. In another deed drafted in 16/5/1123(2/7/1711), Shah Sultan Husayn urges the future *mutawallis* to take only their trusteeship fees. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 174–75.
31. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 167.
32. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 166.
33. In the text of the deed, the scribe writes *diya'*, which means real estate, properties. Obviously, here that is out of context—it must be *day'*, which means damaged.
34. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 167.
35. Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Safaviya dar 'arsah-i din, farhang va siyasat* (1379; Qum: Pizhuhishkadah-i Hawzah va Danishgah, 2000–2001), vol. 2, 745.
36. Rasul Ja'fariyan published a copy of the *waqf-nama*, see Ja'fariyan, *Safaviya dar 'arsah-i din, farhang va siyasat*, 746–49.
37. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 169–70.
38. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 222.
39. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 188–90.
40. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf*, 190.
41. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 127.
42. Sipinta, *Tarikhcheh-ye awqaf Isfahan*, 162.
43. Sipinta, *Tarikhcheh-ye awqaf Isfahan*, 162–63.
44. Sipinta, *Tarikhcheh-ye awqaf*, 129–30, 199.
45. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 169.
46. See Shah Sultan Husayn's *hukm* to Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi in the end of the thesis.
47. For more information on his teaching circle, see Muhsin Fayd Kashani, *Dah risala-yi muhaqqiq-i buzurg Fayd Kashani*, ed. Rasul Ja'fariyan (Isfahan: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i 'Ilmi wa Dini-i Imam Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, 1992), 61–63.

48. ‘Abd al-Nabi Qazwini, *Tatmim Amal al-amil*, ed. Ahmad al-Husayni and Mahmud al-Mar’ashi (Qum: Maktabat Ayatullah al-Mar’ashi, 1986), 77–78.
49. Sipinta, *Tarikhcha-yi awqaf Isfahan*, 169–70, 299.

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II. Imperial Patronage of Literature in the Ottoman World, 1400–1600

MURAT UMUT INAN

The reigns of Murad II (r. 1421–1451) and Mehmed II (r. 1451–1481) marked the beginning of a more systematic patronage of literature in the Ottoman Empire. Murad II was the first Ottoman sultan to show a particular interest in poetry, regularly hosting literary and scholarly gatherings at his court in the city of Edirne (then the Ottoman capital) and frequently supporting the work of poets and scholars under his aegis. Inspired by his father, Mehmed II paid special attention to establishing a courtly literary circle and provided stipends for members of the literary community thriving under his auspices, which included thirty court poets. Shortly after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the new ruler took pioneering steps to turn his burgeoning capital city into an acclaimed center of literary production. To that end, he brought together in his court not only numerous literary craftsmen but also invited famous figures to Istanbul, including the Persian poet and intellectual ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492).¹ Poetic patronage, in particular, reached its apogee under Suleiman I (r. 1520–1566), better known as Suleiman the Magnificent, during whose time, as the Ottoman biographer Aşık Çelebi (1520–1572) put it, “dews of beneficence rained down upon the rose garden of the hopes of poets.”² In Aşık Çelebi’s opinion, poets were able to acquire such unprecedented support from the royal court thanks to four particular characteristics of the reign of Suleiman: the remarkable growth of imperial income resulting from military and geographical expansion; the economic and political stability achieved by a long-reigning sultan; the unequaled influx of scholars, artists, and poets from the Arab lands and Persia to Istanbul; and, finally, the sultan’s passion for reading,

studying, and writing poetry.³ Throughout the 1400s and 1500s, the imperial patronage of literature continued in an unbroken chain, becoming an institutionalized tradition handed down from sultan to sultan, from Murad II to Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603).⁴ The sultans' motivation in offering patronage to men of letters was to promote the formation and development of a refined literary culture that would blend together Arabic, Persian, and Turkish traditions in creative ways and represent the grandeur of an empire fashioning itself as the new patron of the Islamic world. The Ottoman poets who received imperial patronage were expected to be well versed not only in Turkish but also in Arabic and Persian languages and literatures and were encouraged to craft fine literary works that would match and even excel those produced by the Arabic and Persian masters of literature.

Usually, poets were financially supported by sultans and princes, who requested works that suited their literary taste, or commissioned translations and commentaries on the Arabic and Persian literary classics they were interested to read or learn more about. Members of the court and the ruling class were equally driven to publicize themselves as great patrons of literature and art. Ibrahim Pasha (c. 1493–1536), the grand vizier of Suleiman the Magnificent, was nicknamed "Gold-scatterer" for his unmatched generosity and caring toward literati and artists. As someone who studied and wrote poetry, Ibrahim Pasha particularly welcomed the poets visiting him in his palace, which became not only the second major hub of patronage after Suleiman's court but also one of the lively literary venues of early sixteenth-century Istanbul, thanks to the growing number of poets who joined the grand vizier's circle.⁵ Religious feasts, royal ceremonies, public festivals, and imperial celebrations were the prime occasions during which sultans and the ruling elite were approached, directly or via courtly intermediaries, by poets who wanted to showcase their talents and present their finely crafted pieces, which ranged from short poems to works of considerable length. The poets seeking patronage saw these occasions as a great opportunity to request funding or a position; those who were already members of an entourage used these same occasions to cement their relations with their patrons and to promote their work.

Geographically, the imperial capital of Istanbul was the center of literary patronage, a metropolis that attracted hundreds of poets from all corners of the empire and the Islamic world who wanted to introduce themselves and their work through literary networks that led all the way up to the court and, it was hoped, to the sultan. Ahmed Ahdi (d. 1594), a poet who arrived in Istanbul from Baghdad in the mid-sixteenth century, described the city as a place brimming with poets: "I came to Constantinople and saw that it is a noble and beautiful city. . . . Since it is a place under the protection of the sultan of sultans, there are innumerable refined poets and prolific men of learning."⁶ The prospects of securing the attention and support of patrons were not limited to Istanbul. Bursa and Edirne, the former Ottoman capitals, and Manisa, Amasya, and Kütahya, the three major centers where princes were trained as future rulers, also were populated by many poets in pursuit of sponsorship and recognition. In particular, the court of Prince Ahmed (1465–1513),

the son of Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), in Amasya was home to many talented poets and artists who were drawn to the city, from Anatolia as well as from Iran, in the hope of obtaining the patronage of a benevolent prince filled with enthusiasm for literature and the arts.⁷

Poets under imperial patronage received different forms of beneficence: some poets, particularly those affiliated with the royal court or household of a governor, were paid a regular salary, either an *ulufe* (monthly salary) or a *salyane* (annual salary), and employed in secretarial, bureaucratic, and academic positions. The celebrated lyric poet Necati Bey (d. 1509), for instance, was appointed by Mehmed II to a post in the scribal service, which provided him with an income of seventeen *akçes* (aspers) per day.⁸ According to court payment records, more than thirty poets received a *salyane* during the time of Bayezid II. The same records also indicate that in 1535 Sultan Suleiman's favorite poet, Hayali Bey (d. 1556), was paid a salary at the rate of 50 *akçes* daily.⁹ Those poets who presented their *gazels* (lyric poems), *kasides* (panegyrics), or recently completed works to the sultans, or sent a copy of their literary masterpieces to the court, were presented with *caizes* (rewards), including money, jewelry, and valuable clothes. It is recorded in imperial registers that the chancellor and court poet, Cafer Çelebi (d. 1515), for instance, was paid 10,000 *akçes* for each of the four *kasides* he wrote for Bayezid II. Likewise, the poetess Mihri Hatun (d. after 1512) received 3,000 *akçes* when she dispatched a copy of her *divan* (poetry collection) to the court of Bayezid in 1508.¹⁰ Further, some privileged poets were even granted a *timar* (small fief) or *zeamet* (large fief), which meant that they received part or all of their income from land revenue. Hayali Bey, for example, was the holder of a *zeamet* worth 100,000 *akçes* per year.¹¹

Literary patronage worked from the bottom up. When a young and gifted poet was noticed by an established poet or an associate of the ruling class, he would be introduced to a notable with political ties who, in turn, would recommend the poet to a local or provincial ruler. A poet's inclusion in the patronage system sometimes, if not often, meant his involvement in the politics of the royal court. This was particularly the case with poets supported by competing political figures, such as viziers and high-ranking bureaucrats, who sought opportunities for promotion by getting closer to the sultan. In such a political context, a poet's personal connections with the sultan often enhanced his sponsor's chances for promotion to higher ranks in the court hierarchy. As courtly rivalry intensified, poets belonging to opposing courtly cliques competed with one another to gain the sultan's favor both for their own careers and for the benefit of their patrons.¹²

The 1400 to 1600 period can be considered the golden age of literary patronage, mainly for two reasons. First, poets of the period were generously funded in several forms and on myriad occasions, which contributed to the increased production and distribution of literature in Ottoman society as well as to the growing employment of people with literary backgrounds in Ottoman bureaucratic and academic institutions. Second, the sultans of the era, from Murad II to Murad III

(r. 1574–1595), were all productive poets who composed poetry on a regular basis, presided over literary meetings, and were interested in literary works and discussions. Throughout this period the Ottoman sultan was always accompanied by a court poet who met with him regularly, ran his literary circle, and was regarded as head of the poets of the time. The poet Ahmed Pasha (d. 1496), for instance, was one of the frequenters of Mehmed II's court, where he held a prestigious position as tutor of the sultan and was later promoted to vizierate. Another famous example is Selim I (r. 1512–1520) and his mentor Halimi Çelebi (d. 1516). As noted by Ottoman biographers, Halimi was more than a fellow court poet: he was Selim's chief counselor and closest confidant, accompanying the sultan not only during his residence in Istanbul but also during his travels and campaigns.¹³ Last but not least, Hayali Bey enjoyed close proximity to Sultan Suleiman to the extent that he was admitted to his private circle, which, to no surprise, sparked jealousy among fellow poets, as we learn from the poet's biography by the Ottoman historian Mustafa Ali (d. 1600).¹⁴

These examples illustrate that the form of patronage sometimes went beyond the bestowal of money on a needy poet: it involved a companionship between the patron and his favored poet, who sometimes shared the joyous moments of poetry reading at a wine gathering, sometimes discussed a poem or literary issue during a tutoring session, and sometimes engaged in long, intimate conversations on a military expedition. The close patronal relationship between the two was a symbiotic relationship that benefited both patron and poet. The patron multiplied the dignity and fame of both his name and his court as he became known, gradually and widely, as the generous supporter of the work of gifted literati who conquered hearts and minds within and beyond the borders of his empire, and the beneficiary of royal patronage enjoyed prestige, financially and socially, while his literary output circulated widely and was held in high esteem.

OTTOMAN *TEZKİRES*

The passages translated here are from three Ottoman Turkish *tezkires* (biographies of poets) compiled, respectively, by the Ottoman biographers Sehi Bey (d. 1548), Latîfî (1491–1582), and Aşık Çelebi (1520–1572), who were also poets associated with literary circles and enjoyed, though sporadically, the backing of patronal figures. These *tezkires* provide biographical accounts and anecdotes about Ottoman poets, present us with samples of their poetry, often accompanied by literary critical comments, and offer insights into how they made connections that brought them into contact with patronage networks.¹⁵

Dated 1538 and titled *Heşt Bihişt* (*Eight Paradises*), Sehi Bey's work is the first Ottoman collection of poet biographies. The collection includes 240 biographical entries and, as its title implies, is divided into eight sections, with each section devoted to a group of poets except the first one, which is dedicated to the reigning

sultan Suleiman and his poetry. The *tezkire* concludes with an epilogue in which Sehi praises Suleiman as a patron who is appreciative of the work of men of letters and artists and is capable of rewarding them appropriately. Sehi found a chance to present his newly completed *tezkire* to the sultan in 1538 when he stopped in Edirne on his return to Istanbul after one of his European campaigns. Although Sehi's work was appreciated, he did not receive as much financial support as he had hoped. Suleiman's patronage of Sehi Bey began, however, well before 1538. When Selim I appointed his son Suleiman as governor of Manisa in 1513, the prince took Sehi as his chancellor. Sehi was offered a position in the department responsible for the maintenance of the imperial army soon after Suleiman ascended to the Ottoman throne in 1520, although he was later dismissed from this position and appointed administrator of a small estate in Edirne where he spent the rest of his life far from his beloved patron.¹⁶

Latifi's *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuara ve Tabsirâtü'n-Nuzama* (*Biography of Poets and Beacon for Versifiers*) is an alphabetically arranged compilation including more poets, 334 in total, as well as more detailed biographical and literary information. The *tezkire* was completed in 1546 and presented to Sultan Suleiman, who welcomed Latifi's work and secured him a position as a secretary in a pious endowment in Istanbul. Latifi stayed in his position until 1553, when he was discharged and assigned to a minor post in Rhodes. Judging by the complaining tone of his introduction to the *tezkire*, Latifi did not have a long-standing patronal relationship to the court, nor did he have continuing access to patronage resources.¹⁷

The year 1568 marks the appearance of Aşık Çelebi's biographical dictionary, *Meşairü'ş-Şuara* (*Assemblies of Poets*), which he presented to Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574). In the same year Aşık Çelebi completed another biographical work, which he wrote in Arabic and presented to the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (in office 1565–1579). These two works earned him a judgeship in Skopje, a position he held until his death in 1572. Aşık Çelebi's dictionary is the largest of the three *tezkires*, featuring the biographies of 426 poets arranged not in alphabetical order but in the order of the letters of the *abjad* system, wherein each letter has a numeric value.¹⁸ The *tezkires* differ from one another in terms of the compiler's focus and approach to biographical writing, but one common thread ties the three texts together—they all feature a separate section on Ottoman sultans who wrote poetry or compiled their poems into a *divan*. Always placed at the beginning of the *tezkires*, these sections are particularly foregrounded and provide a space for the biographers to draw attention to the active engagement of sultans with poetry as well as to their patronal role in the flourishing of poetic production and in the shaping of the literary sphere in the Ottoman world.

These translations provide access to the workings of literary patronage in the Ottoman courtly context because they illustrate both how Ottoman sultans are portrayed, not merely as patrons but as readers and producers of literature, and the ways in which poets established patronal as well as personal ties with powerful courtiers, as well as with the sultan.

TRANSLATION

Selections from Sehi's Eight Paradises (Heşt Bihişt)

Mehmed II:

No other sultan showed poets respect and honor as he did. The circle of poets around him was incomparable to that of any other reign. He bestowed generous grants upon each of them. He regularly invited his poets to his noble presence for poetic contest. Skilled poets from Iran and the Arab lands were sought, found, and brought to him. He held them in great esteem.¹⁹

Ulvi:

He mastered the art of poetry and had a very good grasp of its semantics. During the time of Sultans Murad [II] and Mehmed [II] he was always in the service of the court, which is the refuge of the world. When he presented kasides, he would be showered with common as well as with special gifts. As such, he benefited from royal favors and munificence. When he became old and feeble, he could not make it to the threshold of felicity [the court], but still he continually sent kasides.²⁰

Sayi:

He is a man of knowledge. He writes poetry in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. In his youth, he became friends with the famous merchant Dülgerzade Muhammed Çelebi, the son of Hoca Şems, and went with him to the city of Skopje. Meanwhile, the late Sultan Bayezid [II] saw one of Sayi's gazels and found it admirable. He gave an order that the author of the gazel should be sought and found. They searched for Sayi everywhere and finally located him in Skopje. When Bayezid was informed, he sent one of his servants to the city to let Sayi know that he employed him in his service and conferred upon him a position at his court as the holder of the sultan's pen-case.²¹ "I do not need position," he told the sultan's servant bearing in his hand the imperial edict. Thus he did not forsake Dülgerzade's companionship, nor did he accept the position offered by the sultan. . . . Later, when the late Sultan Selim [I] came to the throne, Sayi was sought after and brought to the city of felicity [Istanbul]. He was made tutor to the students trained for royal service. He instructed them in sciences and manners. He passed away while he was in the service of the sultan.²²

Selections from Latifi's Biography of Poets and Beacon for Versifiers
(Tezkiretü'ş-Şuara ve Tabsiratü'n-Nuzama)

Murad II:

He is the first sultan in the Ottoman dynasty who wrote poetry and appreciated the work of poets. Though the sultan himself rarely produced poetry, this art enjoyed the prominence it

deserved and remained in vogue during his imperial reign. Men of letters, too, enjoyed prestige and prosperity. As the tradition has it, the sultan convened his poets and scholars twice a week to encourage discussion . . . and assigned a discussant for every branch of science and art . . . so that everyone's merit would be recognized and no one would be treated with injustice. When it became known who was good and who was bad, he would reward the talented ones with favors, privileges, and titles. Thus he followed the path of justice in judging the qualities of people. When he felt that someone had a certain skill or showed a sign of giftedness, he would greatly esteem him and honor him with a title. The reason why he did so was because he wanted to encourage the study and acquisition of knowledge and virtue. . . . It is said that the sultan was in general enthusiastic about sciences and arts and loved poetry and poets. As it is told, he sprinkled versified words into his conversations, where appropriate, and recited [a] few lines of verse at wine gatherings.²³

Mehmed II:

During his rule, the art of poetry and prose achieved popularity while poets and writers were equally acclaimed. Every year the sultan sent 1,000 florins to Iran and India as a present for Jami ['Abd al-Rahman Jami] and Khvaja Jihan [?], respectively. Also, thirty accomplished poets from the land of Rum [Ottoman Rumelia and Anatolia] were paid a yearly salary. Some of these poets commemorated the history of his conquests in works of verse and prose and others praised him with stanzas and panegyrics. The sultan himself had a refined character and an inclination for poetry. He adopted the pen-name "Avni" [the helper] and occasionally wrote poetry—sometimes a couplet, sometimes a whole poem.²⁴

Ahmed Pasha:

[As the anecdote goes,] one day, at a distinguished gathering presided over by Sultan Mehmed [II], notables and courtiers profusely extolled Khvaja Hafiz [of Shiraz, d. c. 1390], whose eloquent divan is the interpreter of the hidden and expounder of divine revelation. To divine their fortunes, they opened the divan respectfully and came across the following couplet:

Those who turn the dust into gold with a glance,
would they turn the corner of their eye toward us?

When Ahmed Pasha saw that Sultan Mehmed greatly admired the couplet, he improvised a [Persian] couplet drawing on Hafiz's:

Those who turn the dust into gold with a glance
use the jewel dust of your feet to make kohl

A timely improvisation, the couplet was applauded and deemed appropriate for the occasion. In accordance with his immaculate conscience, the learned Sultan Mehmed filled Ahmed Pasha's jewel-scattering mouth with precious stones and highly valued his poetry, which is like pearls strung in order.²⁵

Selim I:

He was always on the lookout for men of competence and skill, searching for them in every nook and corner. . . . He was by nature genuinely interested in Persian and had a cordial relationship with the language. He was as eloquent as Sahban, and as a poet he was the Salman of his day.²⁶ No other poet in Rum except him forsook Turkish poetry in favor of Persian poetry and compiled a Persian divan. Attracted to ['Ali Shir] Nava'i's [d. 1501] poetry, he spent most of his time reading and studying his divan. This contributed to the popularity and circulation of Nava'i's poems during his time. Marked by eloquence, the sultan's poetry is esteemed and acclaimed by men of letters and rhetoricians. Persian literati compare his excellent verses to those of the Persian poet Shahi [of Sabzavar, d. 1453]. They say the sultan, whose poetic language is comparable to that of Hafiz [of Shiraz], is the [Amir] Khusrav [d. 1325] of Rum.²⁷

Şükri:

He has a book on the conquests and legendary battles of the late Sultan Selim [I]. Written in plain verse and composed in eloquent couplets, the book is entitled *Selimname* [Book of Selim]. Şükri presented his book to the sultan [Suleiman I] via the late Ibrahim Pasha, who was the most generous of the generous. In exchange, he was lavishly rewarded with a royal allowance of 20,000 akçes as well as with a tımar worth 20,000 akçes. Thanks to the influence and support of the venerable Pasha, he gained esteem and was drowned from head to toe in the ocean of benevolence. He was unique among his contemporaries in terms of the favor and support he enjoyed.²⁸

*Selections from Aşık Çelebi's Assemblies
of Poets (Meşairü's-Şuara)*

Lamii Çelebi:

He wrote a charmingly ornate book entitled *Hüsn ü Dil* [Beauty and Heart], which is based on the theme of the *Husn u Dil* [Beauty and Heart] by Fattahi of Nishapur [d. c. 1448]. He sent the book to the court of Sultan Selim [I] and, in return, was appointed to a position. Thus he gained what he hoped for. Later he composed a work in the *hazaj* meter.²⁹ Entitled *Ferhadname* [Book of Farhad], the work was presented as a gift to the sultan, who conceded to him the revenue of a village as a salyane. When the late Sultan Suleiman [I] wanted to have a translation of Unsuri's [d. 1039–40] *Vamiq u 'Azra* [Vamiq and Azra] and looked for a capable poet, Kadiri Çelebi and Muhyiddin Çelebi, the chief military judge, encouraged and urged Lamii to translate the romance. Within six months he completed the translation, which is versified in the *ramal* meter.³⁰ Lamii appended to his translation a kaside with the refrain “rose” and presented his work to Sultan Suleiman in a way as if he scattered rose petals on the skirts of his garment. The sultan honored him with splendid gifts and rewards. As such, he blessed the sapling of his wishes.³¹

Hayali Bey:

When he became acquainted with Sultan Suleiman [I] . . . he was initially given an *ulufe*. Later he was offered first a timar and then a zeamet. The sultan bestowed on him his patronage and loaded him with favors each time he presented a gazel or kaside. The value of his zeamet holdings was more than 100,000 akçes . . . It is no wonder that Hayali became Hayali: the late Sultan Suleiman . . . chose him from among so many poets and treated him with distinction all the time. And by doing this, the sultan had other poets bitten by the wicked snake of jealousy. . . . With his favors and caring support, the sultan left his fingerprints on everything found in Hayali's poetry: from lofty meanings, rare nuances, and pleasing love-similes to elaborate expressions, mystical sayings, and masterfully crafted couplets.³²

Zati:

[Aşık Çelebi quotes from Zati:] I came to Istanbul in the reign of the late Sultan Bayezid [II]. It was a time of generosity and expectations. It was a time when scholars, bureaucrats, sheikhs, and poets were lavished with caizes and salyanes. I presented to the sultan kasides celebrating a feast or the coming of winter and spring. With my own eyes, I saw in the mirror of his generosity that my every hope was fulfilled. I also presented a kaside to Ali Pasha, who was a successful vizier, a fulfiller of wishes, and a man with a sense of humor. . . . He gave me a permission to enter his private gatherings. He also plentifully supplied me with money, food, and clothes including turbans and special garments. The late sultan [Bayezid II] ordered the poets [under his patronage] to present three kasides each year: one for the New Year festival and one for each of the [two] feasts.³³ Every year I was paid a caize of 2,000 akçes at the New Year festival and furnished with brocade and broadcloth at each feast. I made my living with these caizes and salyanes for many years. . . . I became included in the private gatherings of the viziers and was admitted to the parties attended by their companions. Hersekzade, too, who often held drinking parties, had a compassion for me and was always generous to me. I had no desire or concern to obtain a position or gain a title: I was peacefully happy and enjoying a prosperous life thanks to the salyane granted by the sultan, the gifts and favors I received from Ali Pasha and Hersekzade as well as from the chief military judges Hacı Hasanzade and Müeyyedzade, and the endless caizes bestowed on me by the [imperial] chancellor Tacizade Cafer Çelebi . . . The sultan [Bayezid II] asked his court poets for gazels. We collected our newly composed gazels together and had them delivered to the court. He overwhelmed us with so many favors that it seemed like we were presented with the royal treasury. When the sultan was perusing my gazels, the one with the rhyme letter "f" engaged his attention. . . . He read aloud the following couplet [from that gazel]:

He came, the one who turns
the garment of asceticism into a piece of coarse cloth.
Oh ascetic, pull your head into your cloak like a tortoise!

The sultan nodded his head and said, “My God, look at that [couplet]! They say we live in a world in which we have run out of meanings. God forbid, the world is full of meanings! But it takes skill to find them out!” Then he ordered the chief eunuch of the harem: “Let them give Zati a post.” . . . When Sultan Selim [I] came to the throne, I gave him a kaside with the rhyme letter “n.” He liked this couplet:

Oh my sultan, justice is an unrestrained servant at your door!
Nushin-ravan couldn't restrain him by chaining him up!³⁴

Though he did not give me a promotion, he raised the amount of my caizes and ordered that I be granted the income of an available village. . . . Then came the reign of Sultan Suleiman [I]. Being under his shadow meant felicity. It was as if I were under the divine shadow. The kasides I wrote for him were welcomed and esteemed in his presence. He provided me with caizes and salyanes and made my wishes come true.³⁵

NOTES

1. For the development of Ottoman literature under Mehmed II, see Gönül Tekin, “Fatih Devri Türk Edebiyatı,” in *İstanbul Armağanı*, ed. Mustafa Armağan (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995), 1:161–235; Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, ed. William C. Hickman, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 470–78.
2. Filiz Kılıç, ed., *Aşık Çelebi: Meşairü’ş-Şuara* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2010), 1:203. For a list of the poets who received grants and cash rewards during the time of Suleiman the Magnificent, see İsmail E. Erünsal, “Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Devrine Ait Bir İnamat Defteri,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 4 (1984): 1–17.
3. Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi*, 1:203–10.
4. For a general account of the system of patronage in the Ottoman Empire, see Hilal Kazan, *XVI. Asırda Sarayın Sanatı Himayesi* (İstanbul: ISAR Vakfı, 2010), 17–61. For literary patronage, see Halil İnalcık, *Şair ve Patron: Patrimonyal Devlet ve Sanat Üzerinde Sosyolojik Bir İnceleme* (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2003); Tuba Işınsu Durmuş, *Tutsan Elini Ben Fakirin: Osmanlı Edebiyatında Hamilik Geleneği* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009).
5. For İbrahim Paşa’s generosity, see Ahmet Sevgi, ed., *Latîfî’nin İki Risalesi: Enisü’l-Fusaha ve Evsaf-ı İbrahim Paşa* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1986).
6. Süleyman Solmaz, ed., *Ahdi ve Gülşen-i Şuarası* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2005), 87.
7. Kazan, *XVI. Asırda*, 123–25.
8. Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi*, 2:852.
9. Kazan, *XVI. Asırda*, 54.
10. İsmail E. Erünsal, “II. Bayezid Devrine Ait Bir İnamat Defteri,” in *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinin Arşiv Kaynakları* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, 2008), 54, 63, 75, 81.

11. Kazan, XVI. *Asırda*, 105.
12. For instance, for the competition between Suleiman's grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha and his chief treasurer İskender Çelebi (d. 1535), see Durmuş, *Tutsan Elini Ben Fakirin*, 45–50. For a different but comparable context in which patronage was politically motivated, see Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 3.
13. See, for instance, Rıdvan Canım, ed., *Latifi: Tezkiretü's-Şuara ve Tabsiratü'n-Nuzama* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2000), 231.
14. Mustafa İsen, ed., *Künhü'l-Ahbar'ın Tezkire Kısım* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 1994), 212–13.
15. For a general introduction to Ottoman tezkires, see J. Stewart-Robinson, "The Ottoman Biographies of Poets," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24, nos. 1–2 (1965): 57–74.
16. For Sehi and his work, see Günay Kut, ed., *Heşt Bihîşt: The Tezkire by Sehi Beg* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Printing Office, 1978).
17. For Latifi and his work, see Canım, *Latifi*, 7–62.
18. For Aşık Çelebi and his tezkire, see Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi*, 1:27–82.
19. Kut, *Heşt Bihîşt*, 96–97.
20. Kut, *Heşt Bihîşt*, 196.
21. That is to say, Sayı became the sultan's personal secretary.
22. Kut, *Heşt Bihîşt*, 225–26.
23. Canım, *Latifi*, 137–38.
24. Canım, *Latifi*, 141.
25. Canım, *Latifi*, 158–59.
26. Sahban al-Waili (d. 674) is an Arab poet and orator who was famed for his eloquence. Salman Savaji (d. 1376) is a famous Persian panegyrist.
27. Canım, *Latifi*, 150.
28. Canım, *Latifi*, 325.
29. *Hazaj* is one of the common syllabic meters used in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish poetry.
30. *Ramal* is another common syllabic meter.
31. Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi*, 2:745–46.
32. Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi*, 3:1544–48.
33. Namely, the Feast of Sacrifice and the Feast of Fast-Breaking.
34. Nushin-ravan is the name of a Sassanian king famous for his justice.
35. Kılıç, *Aşık Çelebi*, 3:1580–84.

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III. A Letter of Advice from a Mughal Gentleman to His Son

RAJEEV KINRA

The letter under analysis here was written by the Mughal gentleman, poet, and state secretary Chandar Bhan Brahman (d. c. 1670) and addressed to his son Tej Bhan.¹ As their names indicate, both the author and the recipient of the letter were high-caste Hindus, part of the large population of non-Muslims who took advantage of the Mughals' pluralistic attitudes toward religion and politics to carve out careers for themselves in state service.² Chandar Bhan's father, a certain Dharam Das, was the first in his family to learn Persian and join Mughal service as a secretary in their native province of Punjab sometime during the reign of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), and Chandar Bhan himself was born in the regional capital of Lahore. He began his own career in Mughal service some time in the 1610s under the noted architect and city planner Mir 'Abd al-Karim "Ma'mur Khan," who at the time served as Lahore's *mir-i 'imarat*, or superintendent of buildings, under Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) and later went on to have a hand in supervising financing and construction of perhaps the most celebrated Mughal architectural monument of all, the Taj Mahal (built mostly during the 1630s). Toward the end of Jahangir's reign, Chandar Bhan began working for the noted amir Afzal Khan Shirazi (d. 1639), who had become a close confidante of Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658) while the latter was still a prince, and he went on to serve for nearly the entire decade of the 1630s as the chief minister (*wazir*).³

Chandar Bhan Brahman continued to serve Afzal Khan throughout the latter's tenure as *wazir*, and after Afzal Khan's death he continued working in Shah Jahan's central government—sometimes directly for the emperor himself, for instance,

during a stint as Shah Jahan's personal diarist (*waqi'a-nawis*), but mostly working with Shah Jahan's various chief ministers in the imperial fiscal office, or *diwani*. After his official retirement from imperial service in the early 1660s, Chandar Bhan continued to serve the Mughal royal family as the manager of the Taj Mahal complex in Agra, where he oversaw the accounts, maintenance, special events, dispersal of charity, and collection of revenue from the surrounding villages designated for the tomb's upkeep. We also learn from an entry in the official court records, or *Akhbarat-i Darbar-i Mu'alla*, that by the 1660s Chandar Bhan's son Tej Bhan—the recipient of the letter translated here—was also working as a secretary in imperial service. The entry dates from October 1666 and records a directive from Emperor Aurangzeb 'Alamgir (r. 1658–1707) asking his officials in Agra to present robes of honor to Chandar Bhan, who is described as the manager of the tomb complex (*diwan-i maqbara*), and to “Tej Bhan, the son of Chandar Bhan, who serves as the auditor of the tomb's accounts (*mustaufi-yi maqbara*).” This is the last known record of either Chandar Bhan or Tej Bhan in an official contemporary historical source.

The letter translated here is reproduced in Chandar Bhan's account of his career in imperial service, *Chahar Chaman* (The Four Gardens), as well as in his collected letters, usually known as the *Munsha'at-i Brahman*, which he selected and compiled himself during his own lifetime. It is largely on the basis of these two exemplary works of *insha'*, or “creative prose,” that Chandar Bhan earned a reputation as a master prose stylist, and both *Chahar Chaman* and *Munsha'at-i Brahman* circulated widely in early modern Indo-Persian literary and intellectual circles. Chandar Bhan was also an accomplished poet, whose collection of *ghazals* (lyrics) and *rubai's* (quatrains) was well known in early modern Mughal literary circles as the *Diwan-i Brahman*. Indeed, scores of manuscripts of all three texts are scattered in various archives in India and around the world, although only Chandar Bhan's poetry was available in a modern printed edition prior to the early 2000s. No critical edition of any of Chandar Bhan's works has ever been compiled, so this translation, unless otherwise noted, is based on the version of the letter found in the modern edition of *Chahar Chaman* (2007) edited by Yunus Ja'fari, with the page numbers of the original printed edition in brackets. I myself have added the roman numerals and section headings, to help the reader navigate the text.

PUTTING CHANDAR BHAN'S ADVICE IN CONTEXT

This letter is clearly intended to echo the genre of advice literature known in Persian as *nasihat-namas*, which would have been well known to Chandar Bhan's discerning contemporary readers as part of the larger corpus of Indo-Persian treatises on moral and political wisdom known as *akhlaq* and *adab* literature. Such texts sometimes fell under the rubric of “advice for kings” (*Nasihat al-muluk*) and served a function in the larger Persianate world similar to that of the European genre

of “mirrors for princes.” Classic examples of the genre include Nizam al-Mulk’s *Siyasat Nama* (*Treatise on Politics*; eleventh century), Ghazali’s *Nasihāt al-Muluk* (*Advice for Kings*; twelfth century), Kai Ka’us ibn Iskandar’s *Qabus Nama* (*The Book of Qabus*; eleventh century), Nizami ‘Arūzi’s *Chahar Maqala* (*The Four Discourses [on Government]*; twelfth century), and the celebrated polymath Nasir al-Din Tusi’s *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (*The Nasirean Ethics*; thirteenth century), a text that was read widely in Mughal India and was among those Chandar Bhan specifically recommends that Tej Bhan should study carefully.⁴

Chandar Bhan’s own letter was not necessarily aimed at princes. Rather, it was intended as a much more general set of norms and advice for the aspiring young Mughal gentleman, and especially an aspiring state secretary (*munshi*) such as his son Tej Bhan—a “mirror for munshis,” as I have called it elsewhere.⁵ Modern accounts of Mughal life often leave the reader with an impression of unending opulence and grandeur; but here we see a different side of that world, a more everyday guide to living as an ordinary, albeit respectable, gentleman-official against the backdrop of all that imperial wealth and splendor. One of the central themes running through the letter (and Chandar Bhan’s *oeuvre* more generally) is the importance of leading a life of “balance” (*i’tidal*), a concept that comes directly out of the *akhlaq* tradition. He advises Tej Bhan to pursue knowledge, but to privilege the pursuit of practical knowledge over merely abstract or theoretical knowledge. He encourages him to lead a life of piety and devotion (significantly, without specifying any particular sect or deity), and to aspire to the ascetic ideals of “nonattachment” (*bi-ta’alluqi*) common to the mystical dimensions of both Hinduism and Islam, even as he acknowledges that for most people the practical realities of living in the world require a commitment to work, family, and the society of others.

The letter begins with an extended sequence of salutations and blessings (known in Indo-Persian epistolary parlance as *alqab-o-adab*), the bulk of which are expressed in a form of rhythmically rhymed prose (*saj’*) that was very common in *insha’* works of the period but is nearly impossible to reproduce in English without taking extreme liberties with the translation.⁶ Suffice it to say, this extended—and some might argue, quite ostentatious—form of saying “Dear Tej Bhan” served a dual purpose: on one hand, obviously, to greet the recipient in an extremely respectful and even reverential manner; but on the other, to showcase Chandar Bhan’s mastery of the refined style and forms of address that were common in diplomatic and other formal modes of epistolography as an example for his son. Such extended *alqab-o-adabs* were not necessarily the norm in more informal personal letters, even in Chandar Bhan’s other letters to his son and other friends and family. But in this case, with the letter’s extended and formalistic opening, Chandar Bhan seems to be signaling to Tej Bhan—purely in stylistic terms—that this is no ordinary mundane letter from father to son but something much more “official.”

After the opening, the letter can be divided into roughly five sections. (Again, these are my divisions, added for the reader’s convenience; they are not in the

original text.) In the first section, Chandar Bhan emphasizes the fleeting nature of life and the illusory nature of the material world. This is, of course, a common enough theme in both Sufi and Hindu-Vedantic philosophical thought. As we read on, it becomes clear that Chandar Bhan's real message here is not quite that of a renunciant, who forsakes the material world because it is merely an illusion, but rather a form of *carpe diem*—that is, telling his son that precisely *because* the world is fleeting and one's time on earth even briefer still, one should be sure to make the most of one's opportunities in life. Although the world of material existence is ultimately “nothing but a dream and an illusion,” he tells Tej Bhan, nevertheless, one should not squander one's God-given talents and precious life.

Although the prose here is admittedly somewhat convoluted and *recherché*—which is one reason a lot of texts like this are rarely translated in modern scholarship—Chandar Bhan's overall message in this section is actually fairly simple: (1) Just because you were born with a certain status doesn't mean you won't have to work hard to make your way in the world; and (2) Even if it is true that the world is illusory, that is no excuse for just checking out; you must still make the most of your time here and strive to make something of yourself. Indeed, Chandar Bhan closes this first section by noting that his own father, Tej Bhan's grandfather, had given Chandar Bhan himself similar advice in his youth, and he expresses regret for not having fully heeded his father's admonitions.

This message of encouraging worldly engagement continues in the early part of the second section, but with a couple of important qualifications. Chandar Bhan notes that the pursuit of knowledge is a crucial endeavor in life, which is not so surprising coming from an intellectual of his stature. And yet at the same time he cautions Tej Bhan not to fetishize superfluous erudition for its own sake but rather to pursue knowledge that has some practical use-value. “Even a little bit of practical knowledge (*ilm ba 'amal*) is better than a surplus of purely theoretical knowledge (*ilm-i bi-'amal*),” he tells Tej Bhan—an observation that leads to an interesting bit of metaphysical speculation. On one hand, Chandar Bhan acknowledges that if one admits the Sufi-Vedantic proposition that the material world is really just an illusion, distracting us from the Divine/Cosmic Reality, then it would be easy to give in to the temptation to simply withdraw from society, from politics, and from the world generally. Indeed, as he says later in the letter, this is precisely what is expected of men of truly “lofty natures” (*fitrat-i buland*). But because “it is beyond the power of most men fully to liberate themselves” while still living in this material world of causes and effects (*alam-i asbab*), he encourages Tej Bhan to take a kind of middle path—remaining productively engaged in society but resisting the allure of becoming too invested in worldly attachments (*ta'alluqat*). Although the discussion in this section is sometimes quite recondite, the message is straightforward: be productively engaged with the world, without becoming too attached to it.

Chandar Bhan reiterates the theme of avoiding worldly attachments in the third section as well, and he counsels Tej Bhan to seek the guidance of wise men such as

“hermits, ascetics, and *darweshes*,” as he himself had done as a troubled youth. His admission that as a young man he used to wander the city, and even beyond to the surrounding wilderness, in search of quietude offers a poignant self-portrait of adolescent alienation quite rare in Mughal literature. He goes on to explain that the work of setting aside one’s ego may seem impossible, but one must always strive—through education, through ethical behavior and good conduct, and through a sense of humility about worldly attachments and material gain—to cultivate an ethical self that works for the benefit of others rather than one’s own advantage. There is an echo here, clearly, of the *Bhagavad Gita*’s famous message of *nish-kama karma*, or “action free from desire,” as Chandar Bhan explains that “it is only laudable to accept the necessity of worldly attachments when it is for the sake of bringing benefit to others, not when it is for the sake of satisfying one’s own material desires.”

At this point, Chandar Bhan once again takes the opportunity to praise his own father’s good character and reiterates that a true gentleman should avoid the corrupting influence of material attachments and, thus, the temptation to exploit his status and influence for personal gain. This is another theme that runs throughout the letter, and in fact throughout Chandar Bhan’s entire prose oeuvre such as when he approvingly quotes Shah Jahan’s *wazir* Sa’d Allah Khan (d. 1656) in an earlier passage from *Chahar Chaman*, stating unequivocally that a good Mughal official should use his position to work for the public interest (*irada-yi khalq*) rather than his own interests (*irada-yi khwud*). Meanwhile, as he closes this section, Chandar Bhan quotes a verse from the celebrated thirteenth-century poet Sa’di Shirazi (apparently a favorite of his father’s) that reflects the kind of learned mastery of the Persian literary canon that he and his father both prized, and, as we will see in the letter’s final two sections, that he would in turn expect from his son Tej Bhan.

It should be evident by now that in Chandar Bhan’s view merely being literate in Persian and mastering a certain set of scribal skills was not enough to make one an elite state secretary, much less a respectable Mughal gentleman. One had to cultivate a certain ethical demeanor, as well as an attitude of detachedness toward material wealth and possessions, which I have referred to elsewhere as a kind of “mystical civility.”

One also had to be very learned, of course, and in the final two sections of the letter Chandar Bhan outlines a kind of syllabus for Tej Bhan, making it clear that in order to become a successful munshi Tej Bhan would have to acquire what we would nowadays call a well-rounded liberal arts education, and to truly excel he would have to have, among other kinds of training, the early modern equivalent of graduate degrees in disciplines as varied as history, literature, philosophy, and political science. He advises Tej Bhan to begin his studies of Persian prose composition, for instance, by emulating the letters (*ruq’at*) of ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414–1492), the celebrated Timurid poet of Herat, and by studying the aforementioned Sa’di Shirazi’s *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, two cornerstones of Persianate literary culture that had been used to teach the art of prose and inculcate moral wisdom in young

and old alike for centuries. Once he has mastered such introductory texts, according to Chandar Bhan, he should move on to more advanced texts in history, politics, and statecraft. Note that Chandar Bhan's reasons for encouraging Tej Bhan to study such works are multiple—today we might say “interdisciplinary”—not only to learn basic information about the past but also to hone his critical thinking skills through identification with people from other times and places, the comparison of different types of genres and texts, and improving his own writing skills by following the example of the established masters of the craft.

In keeping with his larger theme of promulgating “active” or “practical” knowledge, Chandar Bhan also placed a high value on training in various mundane skills, such as accounting (*siyaq*) and penmanship (*khwush-nawisi*), as essential for the well-rounded gentleman-official. Elsewhere in *Chahar Chaman* he had gone out of his way to praise various *wazirs* and other high officials—including Emperor Shah Jahan himself—for their adeptness at performing tasks that depended on such skills themselves, without relying on the help of others. And here, sounding like many a parent who wants his children to pursue “practical” undergraduate majors such as business, economics, engineering, and so on, Chandar Bhan specifically counsels his son to study accounting because it would greatly improve his job prospects: “because there are very few munshis who are also adept at accounts, such men are scarce; indeed, the person who is able to combine mastery of both crafts is a prized commodity, a ‘light upon light’.”

The wording here is revealing: the phrase “light upon light” (*nur ‘ala nur*) is a direct allusion to the Qur'an's so-called *Ayat al-Nur* (Q. 24:35), a famously esoteric passage that became a favorite among late antique and early modern Sufis, philosophers, and literati who made the chapter's potential for mystical interpretation “the subject of constant meditation and commentary,” as one noted modern scholar has put it.⁷ Besides showing off Chandar Bhan's erudition—and, for that matter, the level of erudition he expected of his son Tej Bhan—it points to the important overlap between Mughal ideas about good governance and the role of the kind of “mystical civility” I referred to earlier in the cultivation of the well-mannered Mughal gentleman. In Chandar Bhan's view, it was essential that those who made their living in worldly pursuits, from run-of-the-mill clerks and accountants right up to the most powerful men in the empire—indeed, *especially* the most powerful men—should cultivate a refined habitus of mystical disinterestedness amid the bustle of worldly activity. That is, even if professional or royal obligations made it impossible for them to completely embrace the mystical path of the great Sufis and *yogis* by renouncing material attachments altogether and focusing exclusively on spiritual pursuits, they should nevertheless strive to emulate the humility of such “great men” (*buzurgan*) in their attitude toward the material benefits available to them. Doing so would not only improve their moral character but also, perhaps counter-intuitively, make them even more effective administrators because it would reduce their susceptibility to the lure of greed and corruption.

Finally, Chandar Bhan urges Tej Bhan to master the literary canon, and to study the works of the great literary masters (*ustadan*), both ancient and modern. Especially noteworthy here for the modern student of Persian literature is the fact that Chandar Bhan makes no geographical distinctions among the poets, treating poets from India, Iran, and other diverse regions of the larger Persianate ecumene as part of the same broader literary conversation. This inclusive, cosmopolitan view of the geographical horizons of what constituted good literature runs quite counter to the modern tendency to compartmentalize the Persian literary canon into distinct regional or national styles such as the “Khurasani Style,” the “Iraqi Style,” and later, the allegedly debased “Indian Style” (or *sabk-i khurasani*, *sabk-i ‘iraqi*, and *sabk-i hindi*, respectively). Rather, the main distinction for Chandar Bhan is between the established classical canon of “the ancients” (*mutaqaddimin*)—among whom he includes Indian poets such as Mas‘ud Sa‘d Salman, Amir Khusrau, and Hasan Dehlavi—and the more recent work of “the latest/modern” (*muta’akhhirin*) and “contemporary” (*mu‘asirin*) poets, who all hail from a similarly cosmopolitan and transregional geography. The artificial boundaries insisted upon by modern nationalist literary histories, in other words, simply did not apply.

For those unfamiliar with Persian literature, it is worth noting that Chandar Bhan lived in an era wherein such self-conscious awareness of being “modern” was increasingly common among Indo-Persian literati across South, Central, and West Asia. Poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries routinely, and often exuberantly, valorized a new literary sensibility that prized formal and thematic novelty, innovation, and what came to be referred to as “speaking the fresh” (*tazagui*).⁸ This sensibility is clearly reflected in the list of poets that Chandar Bhan encourages Tej Bhan to study and emulate, as well as elsewhere in his oeuvre. But despite the era’s fashion for novelty and “freshness” (*tazagi*) in literary expression, it is equally important to remember that literati like Chandar Bhan continued to have great respect for the canonical poets of old—a respect for the classics that is perhaps best expressed in Chandar Bhan’s admonition to Tej Bhan that he must master the poetry of “the ancients” (*mutaqaddimin*) before presuming to move on to the moderns and finding his own experimental voice.

All in all, what is perhaps most striking about Chandar Bhan’s letter to Tej Bhan is just how little time he spends on the practical details of making a career as a munshi. The practical skills of calligraphy, accounting, and so forth were all very important, of course. But in Chandar Bhan’s vision, they were simply a basic toolkit, barely a starting point. Indeed, no matter how good one’s basic secretarial skills were, to be a truly refined Mughal gentleman-secretary in Chandar Bhan’s view required a much more profound commitment to a certain kind of rigorous and disciplined self-fashioning—one that demanded good character, a strong moral compass, a sense of compassion, a dedication to the public good over personal gain, and the kind of humility that comes with the mystic’s awareness of just how small we are in the cosmos, however big and important we may seem here on earth.

TRANSLATION

A Letter of Advice

WRITTEN WITH A SINCERE PEN TO MY BLESSED
AND FORTUNATE SON TEJ BHAN

My dear son, the light of my life, the candle in the assembly of happiness, the light that brightens my weakened eyes,⁹ the comfort to my afflicted heart, the strength of my aged days, the support in my time of need, the rose in the garden of hope, the storehouse of endless delight, the respite for my tortured spirit, the salve for the open wound [of my soul], the light of my eye, the delight in my breast, an extension of my own heart, a sliver of my own liver, the capital of the entire world's commerce, the profit from the succession of night and day, the garden of eternal spring, the producer of concord, my private helper, my public companion, whose foot is always on the path of submission and acquiescence (*pay bar tariq-i taslim-o-riza*), the wayfarer through the valley of truth and purity (*rah-rav-i wadi-yi sadq-o-safa*), the comprehender of mysteries, the knower of principles, the expert in good conduct and veritable symbol of dedication (*ramz-shinas qa'ida-dan adab-guzin 'aqidat-nishan*), my prosperous son Tej Bhan—may you always achieve your goals and be insulated from the calamities of this world, your knowledge continue to grow and your mind remain ever perceptive, with the Beloved of Meaning (*shahid-i ma'ni*) in your gaze, a fruitful pen in your grasp, and the tablet of faithfulness (*lauh-i 'aqidat*) forever in front of you!

May God the beneficent and magnificent (Ar: *izad mannan jalla shanuhu*) design and fashion my accomplished son's robes of talent and ability, and garments of courage and fortitude, with the brocade of civility (*husn-i suluk*), good manners (*ma'ash-i nek*), thoughts of the hereafter (*fikr-i ma'ad*), submission (*taslim*), acquiescence (*riza*), piety (*zuhd*), temperance (*parhez*), a desire to please the incomparable Creator (*husul-i riza-yi khaliq-i bi-chun*), benevolence toward all creatures (*imdad-i khala'iq*), performance of good deeds (*zuhur-i umur-i khair*), kindness and commitment to meritorious actions (*ihsan wa sudur-i af'al-i hasana*), and engagement in agreeable activities (*wuqu'-i a'mal-i pasandida*).

Following on these salutations born of my everlasting affection and attachment to you, may it be noted by your mind that is always receptive to good counsel that: even though it is by dint of Divine wisdom and power that everyone [in this world]—whether ignoble or noble, wise or ignorant—enjoys the favor and bounty of blessings from the Divine table, [p. 172] nevertheless many people think that whatever has been distributed [to them] from the factory of Divine generosity was purchased with worldly funds, and they become proud (*mufakharat minu-mayad*). Still, because we are dealing here with the material world of causes and effects (*'alam-i asbab*), no one can entirely relinquish or dispense with the need

to associate and coexist with others, despite our different manners and temperaments. At every step, managing one's relationships with others is essential (*martaba ba martaba yeki ra ba digari tasalli wa intizami ast*). Given this reality, it is important that in accordance with our relationship this supplicant—that is, the father of that prosperous, dedicated, and good-natured son—does not refrain from giving you some essential advice (*lawazim-i nasihat*).

I. LIFE IS FLEETING, MAKE THE MOST OF IT

It is important that my dear son everywhere and at all times—whether sleeping or awake, whether oblivious or alert—should maintain his hold on proper reason (*'aql-i durust*), [and] not be led astray by the seductive charms of this material world [which are like] a beautifully ornamented bride. Having glimpsed the nonexistent phenomenal nature (*namud-i bi-bud*) of this ephemeral waystation, he should consider the visible splendor [of the material world] to be nothing but a dream and an illusion, and understand that whatever comes into existence in this world of forms (*'alam-i surat*) will inevitably don the robes of nonexistence and [the] apparel of annihilation (*tashrif-i 'adam wa kiswat-i fana*). Whoever takes up residence in this fleeting unstable house, moreover, will of course eventually hasten off toward the eternal world (*mulk-i jawidani*).

My son should therefore understand the chance to tarry for a brief while in this perishable world as a prized opportunity, and spend his fleeting life on something—something productive. The precious times that have already passed by will not come again, and there can be no guarantees for the future; so he should not piddle away his life on trifles.

In earlier times, when this supplicant was himself a young man, I considered any intrusion on my precious time to be an annoyance tantamount to a crime. My esteemed father, out of an abundance of kindness and natural affection, shared with me certain counsels, admonitions, and advice (*mawa'iz wa pand wa nasihati-yi chand*). And from among them all, whichever I was willing to heed have benefited me greatly even to this day. But whatever I rejected, whether out of ignorance or immaturity, I have now come to regret. The effect is like a hangover—the realization that although the advice of one's elders may be bitter, it is the bitterness of medicine for one sick with the maladies of ignorance, and a salve meant to prevent the injuries of one's foolish days. Thus, whatever you can do to hasten the improvement of your character, the better it will be for you in the long run.

II. ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD WITHOUT BECOMING TOO ATTACHED TO IT

Although the acquisition of knowledge is a gift from God (*agar chi kasb-i 'ulum ni'mat-i khuda-dad ast*), and the effort to attain it is a sign of good fortune, nevertheless: knowledge without action (*'ilm-i bi 'amal*) is like a fruitless branch. Even a little bit of practical knowledge is better than a surplus of purely theoretical knowledge (*'ilm-i qalil ba 'amal bihtar az 'ilm-i kasir bi-'amal*), [p. 173] even if

the real purpose of action and ultimate goal of true knowledge is that, having abandoned all formal attachments and obligations (*ta'alluqat wa 'awariz-i surat*) one strives toward the Real [that is, Divine] goal (*matlab-i asli*). In keeping one's focus on the True Creator (*afridar [afridgar?]-i haqiqi*), one should never lose sight of the illusory nature of the phenomenal world of His creation (*namud-i bi-bud-i afrin-ash*). And, having gotten hold of the products of this precious life—which represent the very definition of 'knowledge put into practice'—one should brush aside the dust of attachments from the folds of one's garment (*ghubar-i 'ala'iq ra az gosha-yi daman bayad afshanad*).

Still, insofar as the chains of His Creation are inevitably tangled up in the world of material causes and connections (*asbab-i ta'alluq*), from which it is beyond the power of men to fully escape and liberate [themselves], under the circumstances the most agreeable principles are:

- i. to keep one's hands busy with work, and one's heart busy with the Friend [that, is God];
- ii. even in the midst of the panoply [of worldly life], to keep one's eye on the splendor of [Divine] Unity;
- iii. and, from the beginning of one's existence until one's very last act, never to become oblivious [that is, to these higher truths].

Of course, without consulting with good people, and without self-regulation and the safeguarding of one's own character, these things are not easy. Thus one has to work hard and put forth a full effort in order to acquire the means of good fortune.

III. SEEK WISDOM AND BALANCE, AND AGAIN, AVOID ATTACHMENTS

In my own youth and adolescence, while this wanderer in the wasteland of obliviousness (*rah-naward-i badiya-yi ghaflat*) was still enthralled by the impulse toward free-spiritedness (*hawa-yi azadi*), the situation reached such a point and got so extreme that my long nights of wakefulness, brooding, deep thoughts, and grand imaginings would extend into the next day, and days engrossed in lengthy and profound contemplation would merge into night. At times I would impetuously leave the city and set out for the wilderness, only to return some time later in a state of total discombobulation (*sar-asima*). Neither in the city nor in the wilderness did I find any quietude. If the scent of a rose reached my nose, it was like a message of madness (*payam-i junun*). If the trill of a nightingale reached my ears, it was like a nail clawing at my heart. So everywhere that I came across some sign or evidence of the presence of hermits, ascetics, or *darweshes* who had mastered a [spiritual] path, my feet would begin heading toward that place without my mind even realizing it, and I would gaze upon it from a distance. If invited, I would spread out along the edges of the gathering, but otherwise I was content to continue observing from afar, and at such times managed to gain a measure of tranquility.

Notwithstanding the many kinds of differences and disagreements (*takhaluf wa tabayun*) in the ways and manners of the people of this world, I have managed, by maintaining my commitment to my sacred thread, good speech, and good conduct, to set aside my ego in all circumstances. Of course, [it] would be incumbent upon a man of truly lofty nature that, having completely filtered out corruption from himself he should remain unpolluted by attachments, recognize that worldly attachments and diversions such as a wife and family are merely the results of God's sympathetic kindness, and avoid getting ensnared by worry and care for such things altogether. But, if such an attitude is unattainable due to one's youthful personality [p. 174] and other character defects, and has to be deferred to a particular time later on, [in the meantime] the proper thing is that one never stray from a balanced path (*tariq-i i'tidal*). That is, one should strive to cultivate a sense of detachment even though existing right in the midst of worldly attachments (*dar 'ain-i ta'alluq buda ba bi-ta'alluqi dar saza*), and never let go of one's commitment to civility and proper conduct (*husn-i suluk wa ma'ash-i nek*). With generous effort you should dedicate yourself to the taming of hearts, helping other people's hopes and wishes come to fruition, and being useful to the eminent people of the world—for it is only laudable to accept the necessity of worldly attachments when it is for the sake of bringing benefit to others, not when it is for the sake of satisfying one's own material desires.

This *faqir's* father, who was your own grandfather, although in outward appearance he seemed like a man of worldly attachments, always considered himself singular among people of the material world when it came to the esoteric world of his inner self. He always had this hemistich on the tip of his tongue:

To be pure is far better than to be corrupted.

Later on when, thanks to my good fate and fortune this insignificant speck had the honor of joining the eternal imperial court and enjoying the society of famous great men, he constantly stressed the advice (*nasihat*) to me that I should stay alert as I embarked upon my career, and recited this couplet from Shaikh Sa'di, God have mercy on him:

Who told you to throw yourself into the River Jaihun?
Now that you've jumped, you better start to swim!¹⁰

He constantly displayed a level of kindness (*neki*), good-naturedness (*nek-zati*), generosity (*khair*), good conduct (*sawab*), charity (*imdad*), community service (*i'anat-i khala'iq*), the finest principles (*a'in-i nishast-o-bar-khast*), an agreeable manner (*suluk-i pasandida*), and excellent conduct (*tarz-i guzida*), always maintaining the decorum expected in the company of great men (*pas-i shara'it-i suhbat-i buzurgan*), as well as the culture (*adab*), humility (*tawazu'*), resilience (*tahammul*), fortitude (*burdbari*), scruples (*ta'ammul*), thoughtfulness (*tafakkur*), attentiveness to his work (*ghaur dar karha*), a penchant for being affectionate with

friends and for employing the norms of civility among enemies (*taqdim-i marasim-i muhabbat ba dostan wa tamhid-i qawa'id-i sulh ba dushmanan*), responding to evil with kindness, trying to be better than the bad and even the good, and other good and excellent qualities (*wa digar muhsinat wa khubi-ha*). By the grace of God and by paying attention to the inner life/self of that veritable *qibla* for a man like me striving to please his father (*ba 'inayat-i ilahi wa tawajjuh-i batin-i an qibla-gahi-yi in riza-juy-i pidar*), I treated his advice and admonitions like an instruction manual for my world (*dastur al-'amal-i rozgar-i khwud*), and endeavored to live in that very same way.

You too, my son, should endeavor to follow this path even earlier than I did, and in so doing make your grandfather proud of your good character and your father [p. 175] pleased with your success!

IV. STUDY HISTORY, ETHICS, AND OTHER PRACTICAL DISCIPLINES

Because it is important early on to cultivate the norms that are expected in civilized company (*shara'it [ki] dar tahzib-i akhlaq mathlub ast*), it is essential that you be attentive to the words of the elders and act accordingly. Having devoted the wealth of your time to studying [texts like] *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, *Akhlaq-i Jalali*, *Akhlaq-i Muhsini*, the *Gulistan*, and the *Bustan*, never forget for even a moment that the real benefit comes from knowledge combined with action. Although the principal aim in terms of abilities that you obviously [ought to cultivate] is a certain tightness of diction and weightiness of expression, it's also true that excellent penmanship has a value of its own, by means of which you might find a place in the assemblies of great men. My dear son should strive to achieve mastery (*fa'iq*) in both disciplines [that is, prose and penmanship], and furthermore if he can master not only literacy but also accounting, then it will be so much the better—for one does not often come across munshis who are equally knowledgeable in accounting, making such men scarce; indeed, a person who is able to combine mastery of both is a rare commodity, a “light upon light” (*nur 'ala nur*).

A good munshi must also be able to keep secrets, and nothing is more important for an imperial scribe than a virtuous character. Although in this humble servant's capacity as a munshi at the court of the imperial caliphate there has been plenty of opportunity to give in to the basic human impulse toward indiscretion, when it comes to the keeping of secrets I have been like the proverbial flower bud, which, though it may have a hundred tongues [that is, petals], keeps its mouth shut tight. I have never conveyed even a single word from one situation to another, nor under any circumstances have I discussed one person's secrets with anyone else. Whatever I have heard, and wherever I heard it, I forgot it right then and there.

In my experiences among the ranks of scribes and different classes of men (*dar maratib-i nawisandagi wa ruju'-i khala'iq*), by maintaining the best of intentions and never ever letting go of my commitment to civility and good character, I have always been able to act in accordance with my father's advice. I trust, then, that my fortunate son will make a priority of displaying such good manners and

distinguished comportment—that whatever work comes your way will be accomplished without another’s influence [that is, that you won’t have corrupt intentions], and that, considering it your own good fortune to spend time on it you will strive to accomplish others’ objectives as if they were your own. You will find that even in this debased material world there is no task that can’t be accomplished, and no goal that can’t be reached. Thus, the best thing is to have accomplished such things selflessly, with the benefit accruing only to the world around you.

Along the same lines, you must understand the absolute necessity of avoiding engaging in any venture/enterprise that could be considered sinful. This supplicant, in all my years of serving great men and [p. 176] associating with the friends of the times (*‘azizan-i rozgar*) [that is, mystics], never once has the thought of committing evil acts even crossed my mind. Having followed the path of civility (*tariq-i mudara*) with friend and foe alike, I have spent [my life] in perfect sincerity. My son, too, should endeavor never to stray from the path of good deeds and the way of harmony (*tariq-i sawab wa jada-yi i’tidal*).¹¹

V. MASTER THE LITERARY CANON

It will of course already be known to my son, who has an appreciation for literature, that although the Persian canon (*‘ilm-i farsi*) contains a vast wealth that is beyond the scope of any individual to comprehend, nevertheless, by way of an introduction to literature one may begin by studying a selection of exemplary books like *Gulistan*, *Bustan*, and the letters (*ruq‘at*) of Mulla Jami from among all the essential works. When you have acquired a bit of expertise, reading treatises on ethics and politics (*akhlaq*) such as *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* and *Akhlaq-i Jalali*, and studying histories of the past (*tawarikh-i salaf*) such as *Habib al-Siyar*, *Rauzat al-Safa*, *Rauzat al-Salatin*, *Tarikh-i Guzida*, *Tarikh-i Tabari*, *Zafar Nama*, and the like is even more imperative. Such works will not only give you exemplary models of fine writing (*matanat-i sukhān*), you will also learn about the circumstances of the world and its people [in other times and places]. This will come in very handy in learned assemblies and salons (*majalis wa mahafil*) [and by extension, in the world of courtly politics].

I should also append to this letter some of the names of that elite class/canon of literary masters whose *diwans* and *masnawis* this supplicant studied in his youth, so that my dear son, whenever he has the time and opportunity, might also study the works of these great writers. It will be a blessing, giving you a leisurely diversion as well as improving your own writing ability, and give you an entrée into the world of literature. For instance: Hakim Sana’i [Ghaznavi], Mulla Rum, Shams Tabriz, Shaikh Farid al-Din ‘Attar, Shaikh Sa’di, Khwaja Hafiz, Shaikh Auhadi Kirmani, Mulla Jami, as well as other world-renowned poets, stylists, and eloquent men like Maulana Rudaki, the title-page of poets of the world, and others like Hakim Qatran, ‘Asjadi, ‘Unsuri, Firdausi, Farrukhi, Ra’iji, Nasir-i Khusrau, Jamal al-Din ‘Abd al-Razzaq, Kamal Isma‘il, Khaqani, Anwari, Amir Khusrau, Hasan Dihlawi, Mulla Jamali Dihlawi, Zahir Faryabi, Kamal Khujandi, ‘Arusi Samarqandi, ‘Amiq

Bukhari, ‘Abd al-Wasī‘ Jabillī, Fakhr al-Dīn Bandī, Rukn Raza’i bin Majd Hamgar, [p. 177] Abu al-Mafakhir Razi, Mas‘ud Sa’d Salman, Mas‘ud Bak, Farid al-Dīn Ahwal, Usman Mukhtari, Nasir Bukhari, Ibn Yamin, Hakim Suzani, Farid Katib, Abu al-‘Ali Ganja’i, Azraqi, Falaki, Sauda’i, Baba Fighani, Khwaju-yi Kirmani, Asafi, Mulla Sana’i, Mulla ‘Imad Ma’ani, Khwaja ‘Ubaid Zakani, Bisati, Lutf Allah Halwa’i, Rashid Watwat, Asir Akhsikati, and Asir Umani.

It will of course be obvious to my kind son’s advice-accepting intellect that once he has finished the early phase of completely mastering the works of the ancients (*mutaqaddimin*), his natural literary inclinations will lead him to the works of the moderns (*sukhanan-i muta’akhhirin*). And, having begun to assemble a collection of *diwans* and *masnawis*, in the course of time you will acquire a great many books, but after you are finished studying them you can give them to your students. From among all the many great names, some of the [modern] literary masters are Ahli, Hilaki [Hilali?], Muhtasham, Wahshi, Qazi Nur, Nargisi, Qumi, Umidi, Mirza Qasim Gunahabadi, Mulla Zamani, Partawi, Hairani, Jahi, Sarfi, Zamiri, Rashki, Nishani, Malaki, Khairi, ‘Ajzi, Suri, Taufi, Ismi, Saqa’i, Fasihi, Mahwi, Fardi, Sharmi Qandahari, Ja’fri, Hazrat Ilahi, Daraki, Huzuri, Dairi, Farqi, Sururi, Ghururi, Karami, Mulla Kafi, Naziri [Nazri?], Zauqi, Wahidi, Sirri, Fikri, Rab-bani, ‘Arshi, Ada’i, La’li, Shukohi, Raunaqi, ‘Anbari, Lel, ‘Izzati, ‘Urfi, Faizi, Shakebi, Jahani, Nazari, Nau’i, Nazim, Yaghma, Mir Haidar, Mir Ma’sum, Nazar Mashhadi, Ummi, Dasht, Bayazi, Ghiyasa Naqshbandi, Mo’min, Husain, Ru’i, Nadim, Mulla Murshid, Ghiyasa Halwa’i, Mirza Nizam, and various other master poets and literati (*arbab-i sukhan wa ahl-i tab’*) who have authored *diwans* and *masnawis*. There is simply no space to give a complete list of all of their names in such a brief letter.

NOTES

1. The letter has been partially translated in Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 131–98; and Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Making of a Munshi,” *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 61–72. The version included here will, however, be the first full translation of the text. I am grateful to Muzaffar Alam for reading over the Persian text with me and helping decipher some of Chandar Bhan’s more recondite turns of phrase. But all errors and infelicities are, of course, mine, and mine alone.
2. For extended details on Chandar Bhan’s biography and cultural and political milieu, see Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), from which some of the details below are also adapted.
3. For an overview of Afzal Khan’s (a.k.a. Shukr Allah Shirazi’s) life and career, see Rajeev Kinra, “The Learned Ideal of the Mughal Wazir: The Life and Intellectual World of

- Prime Minister Afzal Khan Shirazi (d. 1639),” in *Secretaries and Statecraft in the Early Modern World*, ed. Paul M. Dover (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 177–205; and Corinne Lefèvre, “Messianism, Rationalism, and Inter-Asian Connections: The *Majalis-i Jahangiri* (1608–11) and the Socio-Intellectual History of the Mughal ‘Ulama,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 54, no. 3 (2017): 317–38.
4. The scholarly literature on these and other texts in the genre, many of which have been ably translated into English, is far too extensive to list here. But for an overview of their specific reception in India and influence on Mughal culture and politics, see Muzaffar Alam, “*Akhlaqi* Norms and Mughal Governance,” in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Francoise “Nalini” Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi: Manohar, Centre de Sciences Humaines, 2000), 67–95; Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India, c. 1200–1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 26–80.
 5. Compare with Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 6, 60–94.
 6. For a lengthier attempt to display the style and substance of such rhythmic prose in Chandar Bhan’s work, see Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 102–106.
 7. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950), 18.
 8. For details on the history, culture, and poetics of the *taza-gu’i* movement, see for instance Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1998); Rajeev Kinra, “Make It Fresh: Time, Tradition, and Indo-Persian Literary Modernity,” in *Time, History, and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia*, ed. Anne C. Murphy (London: Routledge, 2011), 12–39; and Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 201–39.
 9. *nur-i dida-yi ramad-rasida*: literally, “who brightens my eyes that have become afflicted with ophthalmia (*ramad*),” a kind of inflammation or conjunctivitis.
 10. Muslih al-Din Sa’di Shirazi, *Bahar-i Bustan: Sharh-i Urdu, Bustan* [Springtime of the Orchard: An Urdu Commentary on the *Bustan*, with the Persian text], Maulana Fazlurrahman ed. (Deoband: Dar al-Kitab, 2000), 401.
 11. Although the version of this letter used here, which appears in the modern printed edition of Chandar Bhan’s *Chahar Chaman* (ed. S. M. Yunus Ja’fari [New Delhi: Centre of Persian Research, Office of the Cultural Counsellor, Islamic Republic of Iran, distributed by Alhoda, 2007], 171–77) continues after this point, the version that appears in the printed edition of Chandar Bhan’s collected letters actually ends here (see *Munsha’at-i Brahman*, ed. S. H. Qasemi and Waqarul Hasan Siddiqi [Rampur: Raza Library, 2005], 95–101).

FURTHER READING

Alam, Muzaffar. “*Akhlaqi* Norms and Mughal Governance.” In *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Francoise “Nalini” Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau, 67–95. New Delhi: Manohar, Centre de Sciences Humaines, 2000.

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FIGURE 11.1 *The Court of Gayumars*

Folio 20 detached from a two-volume copy of the *Shahnama* made for Shah Tahmasb.

Date: c. 1520s–1530s

Place of origin: Attributed to Tabriz, Iran

Credit: Aga Khan Museum, Toronto

11. Painters, Calligraphers, and Collectors

Stunning illustrations and delicate calligraphic arts adorned countless manuscripts and were an integral part of the high cultural production of the early modern period. Such Persian classical works as Firdawsi's *Shahnamah* (*Book of Kings*), Jami's *Haft Awrang* (*Seven Thrones*), and Hafiz's collected poems, among many others, were well received among the literati of the three societies and their powerful patrons. By the early modern period, *The Book of Kings*, in particular, admired for its valorization of monarchical governance and warrior ethos, had become a subject of lavish artistic patronage by the ruling elite of the three empires. Miniaturists and calligraphers sought to surpass their predecessors in their projects, and their royal patrons tried to attract the most skillful artists to their courts and to amass a great collection of illustrated manuscripts in their libraries. The essays in this chapter explore three areas in which art shaped the cultural landscape of the three societies: miniature painting, calligraphy, and their collectors.

In the first essay, Sheila Blair examines one of the finest Persian miniature paintings of the era, *The Court of Gayumars*, by the sixteenth-century Safavid painter Sultan-Muhammad. She takes the reader on a journey from the Safavid court to the contemporary world of museums and art collecting.

In the second essay, Esra Akın-Kıvanç examines the life and work of arguably the greatest Ottoman calligrapher of the sixteenth century, Sheikh Hamdullah. The work under study is the mid-seventeenth-century *Gülzar-ı Savab* (*Rose Garden of Proper Conduct*).

In the third essay, Keelan Overton and Jake Benson explore the world of art and manuscript collecting among the Deccan rulers of southern India against the backdrop of the hegemonic ambitions of the Mughal Empire. Their examination includes a detail study of royal seals and impressions.

I. Reading a Painting

SULTAN-MUHAMMAD'S *THE COURT OF GAYUMARS*

SHEILA BLAIR

In the eyes of many, both connoisseurs and scholars alike, Sultan-Muhammad's *The Court of Gayumars* is the finest Persian painting ever produced.¹ It is also an invaluable historical source. In addition to its aesthetic merits, which are multiple, Sultan-Muhammad's painting tells us about politics and ideology in the early Safavid period, Safavid relations with the Ottomans, Ottoman political aspirations, and the uses and reception of literature and methods of reading in premodern times. It also sheds light on the economics of collecting, U.S. interactions with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and other topics. To exploit this copious information, we need to read and explicate the painting like a text.

THE PAINTING OF *THE COURT OF GAYUMARS*

The first step in using visual evidence is to examine the work of art closely. *The Court of Gayumars* is executed in opaque watercolors, gold, and silver on a very large sheet of paper (32 × 47 cm; 12½ × 18½ in.) with gold-sprinkled margins. The brightly colored scene occupies almost all of the rectangular written area (17.7 × 26.9 cm; 7 × 10½ in.), which is surrounded by gold and colored marginal rulings and divided by thin gold rulings into four columns. The columnar arrangement with similarly shaped letters at the end of each pair of verses shows that the text is poetry (prose is written in a single continuous line), and the *nasta'liq* script suggests that it is Persian. This hanging script with sweeping strokes developed

from the mid-fourteenth century to write Persian, an Indo-European language with many words that end in bowl-shaped letters such as final *ya'*, *ta'*, *nun*, and *sin/shin*. Adopted later in Turkey for writing Ottoman (where it was called *ta'liq*), the script was rarely used for writing Arabic, a Semitic language with a different grammatical structure that favors other combinations of characters. The large size, extensive use of precious metals, and vivid palette all show that this folio comes from a deluxe manuscript.

Several features indicate that this side with *The Court of Gayumars* is the verso (back or b side) of the folio and would have been on the right-hand side in the bound codex. The margin at the left of the folio is narrower and stained, probably from the glue used to attach the sheet with Ottoman synopses added at the turn of the nineteenth century (see section 3 below). The left must have been the gutter or spine of the book. The margin on the right is wider, allowing for trimming should the outer edge become ragged. It is also slightly soiled near the middle and bottom corner, probably the result of fingers turning the pages. The painting protrudes further into the right margin, the one that would be more visible when flipping through the bound volume. And finally, a small catchword is written diagonally just below the painting on the left. This is the first word of the text on the following folio. Always added on the verso, the catchword enabled the binder to quickly assemble the folios in correct order without reading through the entire text. Knowing that this is a right-hand page is important because it tells us what text would have been visible on the facing left page when someone was reading the open book.

The text on the illustrated folio comes from the *Shahnamah*, or *The Book of Kings*, the Persian national epic composed by the poet Firdausi around 1010 CE.² Its 50,000 verses recount the history of Iran from the creation of the world to the Arab conquests in the seventh century. Not surprisingly it became the most frequently illustrated text in Iran. This folio was detached from a lavish two-volume copy that ends on folio 759a with a blank colophon (the tailpiece at the end of a manuscript where a calligrapher typically signed and dated his work), but we can glean its patron and date from other information in the manuscript. The name of the Safavid shah Tahmasb (r. 1524–1576) is mentioned in several places, and the painting depicting “Ardashir and Gulnar” (fol. 516b) is inscribed with the date 1527–28. Such an elaborate project must have taken more than a decade to complete, even in a large workshop, and hence the project is generally attributed to the 1520s and 1530s. Putting these disparate pieces of information together confirms that the manuscript was produced in the early sixteenth century, mainly for Tahmasb, the longest reigning of all the Safavid shahs, probably at his capital Tabriz.³ It is generally known as the Tahmasb *Shahnamah*.

When intact, the deluxe manuscript opened with an elaborately illuminated double-page frontispiece (fols. 2b–3a) to the introduction, which was added to the epic in the early fifteenth century by the Timurid prince Baysunghur. The long introduction is illustrated with two scenes depicting Firdawsi encountering the court poets of Ghazna (fol. 7a) and proving his literary talents at the court of the

Ghaznavid ruler Mahmud (fol. 10a). Next came the dedicatory rosette (fol. 16a) saying that the manuscript was made for the library of the mightiest sultan, Abu'l-Muzaffar Shah Tahmasb of Husayni and Safavid descent. The prologue to the poem began on the back of this folio (16b) with another elaborately decorated head-piece announcing that this is the beginning of the book, the *Shahnamah*. A third painting on folio 18b, *The Parable of the Ship of Shi'ism*, illustrates a theological section in which the poet relates an allegory about how Muhammad and his family sailed on the most magnificent of seventy ships with believers from the various religions of mankind. Firdawsi chose to travel on this ship, and although all perished, the poet was content in the knowledge that he would die along with his saviors. The decision to illustrate this passage, with the heads of Muhammad, 'Ali, Hasan, and Husayn surrounded by flaming halos, leaves no doubt that the patron Shah Tahmasb was using this manuscript to reaffirm his allegiance to the Twelver-Shi'ism to which his line had converted.

The poem proper opens with the story of Gayumars, the first king of Iran. This painting of *The Court of Gayumars* on folio 20b was the first illustration in the poem itself following the long prologue. It is also the finest of the 258 illustrations in this deluxe copy. The story recounts that the benevolent Gayumars ruled from a mountaintop for thirty years. During his reign, mankind learned how to prepare food and clothe themselves in leopard skins. In his presence, wild animals became meek as lambs. The idyllic peace was shattered, however, by the evil demon Ahri-man, who became jealous of Gayumars's beloved son Siyamak. Ahri-man's son, the Black Demon, ultimately slew Siyamak, but Gayumars and his grandson Hushang avenged Siyamak's death by slaying the Black Demon.

The text at the top of the page with *The Court of Gayumars* belongs to the beginning of the episode. The story starts on the recto (the front or a side of the folio). A heading at the bottom of the twenty-two lines of text announces that Gayumars ruled for thirty years. The text continues at the top of the verso (the side with the painting). The break line, the verse directly above the painting that typically tells the painter what to illustrate, says that the lord of the world was Gayumars who dwelled at first upon a mountain. The lines below continue that he and his people dressed in leopard skins and that he taught men about the preparation of food and clothing, which were new in the world at this time. The facing left page in the bound manuscript would have contained the rest of the story about the murder of Siyamak and the revenge carried out by his father and son.

Sultan-Muhammad faithfully illustrated the story. King Gayumars, the largest figure in the image, sits on a mountaintop at the apex of the tightly coiled composition. He seems to look down mournfully at his seated son Siyamak, who will be killed in battle with the Black Demon. Opposite Siyamak on the left of the composition stands the willowy Prince Hushang, Gayumars's young grandson who will avenge his father's death and save the Iranian throne. Before them, the members of Gayumars's retinue gather in a circle with a fantastic landscape below a golden sky. All are bedecked in leopard skins, as mentioned in the text. And the painter

arranged the figures in a circle, a nice conceit as the word used for the followers in the line below the painting is *guruh*, band or group.

In addition to its faithfulness to the text, Sultan-Muhammad may have also been alluding to contemporary events. The young Tahmasb, who was born on February 22, 1514 and who would have been in his teens when Sultan-Muhammad executed the painting, had already restored his dynasty's authority and prestige after the devastating Safavid defeat by the Ottomans at the battle of Chaldiran on August 23, 1514.⁴ He may well have envisioned himself as the avenging Hushang.

Such a personal reading of the painting of *The Court of Gayumars* gains traction as other images in the manuscript also had contemporary resonance. In addition to the emphasis on Twelver-Shi'ism evident from the decision to illustrate *The Parable of the Ship of Shi'ism*, the one dated painting in the manuscript connects to the life of the patron. The scene on folio 519a illustrates the history of Ardashir, founder of the Sasanian dynasty, and his tryst with Gulnar, beloved concubine of the last Parthian king, Ardavan. The painting aptly illustrates the transition from one dynasty to the next (and more favorable) one, but the tender scene of lovemaking, one of the most romantic in Persian painting, may have alluded to a similar event in the life of Tahmasb, who came of age at that time.⁵ The scene shows the couple snuggled beneath a blanket, their slippers neatly aligned on the border of the carpet beneath them. The portico above them is inscribed with a verse about the master architect [God] raising the vault [of heaven]. The upper line says that this edifice (*al-'imarat*) was completed in 1527–28. The inscription can be read as a double-entendre: that this painting and the shah's manhood were realized in that year.

Another painting in the manuscript that specifically names Tahmasb may allude to contemporary events as well. In *Isfandiyar Slays Arjasp and Takes the Brazen Hold* (fol. 442b), the action takes place in an elaborate palace, with soldiers fighting in the central courtyard. The exterior wall bears a long invocation to Shah Tahmasb, whose titles are neatly arranged so that the words Shah Tahmasb fall directly over the portal, which frames Isfandiyar severing Arjasp's head. The image, along with the flowery titles that extol Tahmasb as conqueror and conquistador, flaunt his authority over the unruly Qizilbash amirs whose dissensions plagued the first decade of his rule.

Other images may depict the patron as well. For example, the painting of *Firdawsi Encountering the Court Poets of Ghazna* (fol. 7a) includes the unidentified figure of a youth standing in the upper right. He cannot be a servant because he bears no accouterments. Bedecked in a gold turban with the red baton characteristic of Safavid princes, he stares at the poet. He too may represent the youthful patron Shah Tahmasb.⁶

Altogether, then, this magnificent copy of the *Shahnamah*, itself an epic to bolster Iranian kingship, and its best painting, Sultan-Muhammad's depiction of the court of Gayumars, the legendary first king of Iran, can be "read" as a conscious glorification of its patron, the young princeling Tahmasb.

THE MANUSCRIPT'S RECEPTION AT THE SAFAVID COURT

This sumptuous manuscript, and especially the painting of *The Court of Gayumars*, was already recognized for its prominence within a decade or so of its completion. Writing in 951 (1544-45), the Safavid calligrapher and librarian Dust-Muhammad Haravi (d. c. 1564) assembled an album of calligraphic specimens, drawings, paintings, and other works for Shah Tahmasb's brother Bahram Mirza. The album is now preserved in Istanbul (Topkapı Palace Library, H2154), and in its florid preface the librarian traced the history of calligraphy and paintings.⁷ He ended by recording the portraitists and painters employed in Tahmasb's studio, writing:

First is the rarity of the age, Master Nizam al-Din Sultan-Muhammad, who has developed depiction to such a degree that, although it has a thousand eyes, the celestial sphere has not seen his like. Among his creations depicted in His Majesty's *Shahnamah* is a scene of people wearing leopard skins; it is such that the lion-hearted of the workshop of ornamentation quail at the fangs of his pen and bend their necks before the awesomeness of his pictures.

There is no question that Dust-Muhammad is discussing this very painting, *The Court of Gayumars*. He identifies the painter as Sultan-Muhammad and lists him as the first in the royal library. Dust-Muhammad's text plays on the painting itself, with a reference to the courtiers wearing leopard skins and an amusing metaphor about lionly prowess, both evoking details depicted in the scene. He must have known it well.

Dust-Muhammad's identification of Sultan-Muhammad allows us to flesh out the artist's achievements in this and other contemporary manuscripts. He is one of the few Persian painters for whom we can work out a reasonably full description of his career and achievements.⁸ He was especially talented in painting complex circular compositions with luxurious vegetation and anthropomorphic rocks with faces. His palette is notable for its subtle modulations of color, and he favored a specific canon of figural proportion with wide faces, narrow shoulders, elongated torsos, and unusually small hands and feet. All of these features are visible in *The Court of Gayumars*. Based on this firm attribution, we can assign other paintings with similar features to his hand, including scenes detached from this manuscript such as *The Feast of Sadeh* (fol. 22b) and *Tahmuras Fights the Divs* (fol. 23b), as well as those in other manuscripts such as a dispersed copy of the *Divan* of Hafiz once in the Cartier collection.⁹

But Dust-Muhammad's report was not the only attention paid to this manuscript in the mid-sixteenth century. Around this time at least two paintings were also tipped or inserted into the codex on heavier creamier paper. A large one illustrating the story of *Haftvad and the Worm* (fol. 521b) bears an inscription in the bottom margin "Picture (*surat*) by Dust-Muhammad." Somewhat

confusingly, this painter Dust-Muhammad (d. c. 1560) is not the same person as the contemporary calligrapher/librarian Dust-Muhammad who compiled the album for Bahram Mirza.¹⁰ This artist, sometimes nicknamed as Dust-i Divana ("Crazy Dust"), worked in Tahmasb's studio and was the master of the painter Shaykh Muhammad (fl. 1530s–1590s), thought to be the artist who painted the second illustration added to the manuscript, *First Joust of the Rooks: Fariburz Against Kalbad* (fol. 341b).

It is unclear why these two illustrated folios were inserted into the manuscript at this time. There is no text missing, so they must have replaced two folios that were already there. Perhaps the original illustrated folios were removed to put in an album. Perhaps the older paintings were somehow outdated or even offensive. The new paintings also vary in quality. Dust-Muhammad's picture is large and ambitious; the one attributed to Shaykh Muhammad is consciously archaistic.

The two paintings (and there may be several others) were added to the manuscript during the period when the shah's interest in the arts began to wane.¹¹ We do not know why he lost interest in painting. In 1532–33, he issued the first of several edicts of repentance (*tawba*), in which he had all revenues from taverns, gambling dens, and brothels removed from the state ledgers. Several decades later his amirs and courtiers made a public act of repentance, an act known by its chronogram, "Sincere Repentance," the equivalent of 1555–56. One scholar has argued that Tahmasb turned away from painting because of deteriorating eyesight, possibly due to macular degeneration.¹² During Tahmasb's long reign, the nature of authority in Iran also shifted from the charismatic and messianic claims of his father, Isma'il, to a system focusing on the line's 'Alid lineage and the monarch's central role in it. This manuscript, and the associated arts of book painting, might have seemed closer to the former rather than the latter and hence have been deemed unacceptable.

Whatever the reason for Tahmasb's turning away from painting, one result was that the artists in the royal workshop dispersed. Dust-Muhammad (the painter) emigrated east to join the Mughal prince Kamran in Kabul before moving on to India where he died during the reign of the emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605). Shaykh Muhammad worked for Tahmasb's nephew Ibrahim Mirza, contributing to the most famous manuscript of the next generation, a splendid copy of Jami's *Haft Awrang* (*Seven Thrones*) produced between 1556 and 1565.¹³ Formerly in the Safavid royal collection at Ardabil and now in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (1946.12), it was something of a mail order project that was completed by at least five calligraphers working in three different cities (Mashhad, Qazvin, and Herat). When lavish royal patronage was no longer available in Safavid Iran, the nature of the arts changed as well, and fancy illustrated books were increasingly replaced by single-page paintings and calligraphies mounted in albums. The sumptuous two-volume copy of the *Shahnamah* marks the acme of royal sponsorship and illustrated manuscripts. Its importance, however, did not end there.

THE MANUSCRIPT'S RECEPTION AT THE OTTOMAN COURT

Tahmasb's sumptuous two-volume copy of the *Shahnamah* seems to have languished in the royal library, but several decades later Tahmasb turned to it again, this time for its diplomatic value. To mark the accession of the Ottoman sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574), Tahmasb dispatched a large embassy of more than seven hundred individuals under the leadership of Shah Quli, a prominent military figure. Thirty-four heavily laden camels accompanied the mission, bearing all sorts of “rare and propitious gifts.”¹⁴ They included many books, such as an early manuscript of the Qur'an attributed to the hand of the Prophet's son-in-law 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, as well as the famed two-volume copy of the *Shahnamah* that the shah had commissioned several decades earlier. These books, whose subject matter emphasized the shah's religious and royal pedigree, were specifically chosen to underscore his legitimacy and authority, perhaps even a subtle method of disdaining the Ottomans as mere parvenus.

The Ottomans clearly understood the meaning of the Safavid message, and their reception of the embassy and its gifts was just as carefully orchestrated. From the mid-sixteenth century, they too often produced their own richly illustrated dynastic histories, including the *Sehname-i Selim Han*, a text composed in Persian verse by Seyyid Lokman, official historian (*Sehnameci*) from 1569 to 1595.¹⁵ Several drafts of his text survive, as does the final version (Topkapı Palace Library, A3595), a large (23.6 x 34.3 cm; 9¼ x 13½ in.) volume completed on January 12, 1581. Although smaller than Tahmasb's copy of the *Shahnamah* and only a single volume of 158 folios, its fine calligraphy, careful illumination, and forty-six original paintings, at least ten of them double-page compositions, show that it was inspired by the earlier Persian manuscript. Like the paintings in Tahmasb's *Shahnamah*, those in the *Sehname-i Selim Han* were chosen to underscore the importance of the ruler, in the latter case as the center of an empire protected and administered by his lieutenants.

Of particular relevance is the scene in the Ottoman manuscript depicting *The Safavid Ambassador's Presentation of Gifts to Selim II at Edirne* (folios 53b–54a). Annotations in the draft copies show that the text was manipulated to make sure that painting would be spread over facing pages and incorporate the specific lines enumerating the gifts “of all kinds of beautiful decorated things: an illuminated Qur'an with a grand decorated binding, great books and *Shahnamahs*.” The large painting carefully concurs with the text. In the upper right the Iranian envoys, now dressed in Ottoman robes, bow to the sultan's foot, thereby acknowledging the gifts as a form of tribute rather than an exchange between equals. This image illustrates the text's use of *pishkash*, a word that denotes a gift given from an inferior to a superior. In the foreground of the painting, janissaries, members of the Ottoman military elite, tote the gifts in order of significance. The first holds a

single large book with an elaborate binding, undoubtedly the Qur'an manuscript mentioned in the text. The second and third janissaries each carry two volumes, representing the other "great books and the *Shahnamahs*." Behind them, fellow janissaries hold other gifts such as golden boxes, turban ornaments, and textiles, with larger boxes, rolled carpets, and perhaps even a dismantled tent spread out behind them.

The Ottomans valued luxury books, which became a significant part of court libraries. Archival registers of their books always begin with Qur'an manuscripts and include copies of the *Shahnamah*, the most desirable of the Persian classics. In one list arranged by monetary value, copies of the two texts trump a ruby the size of a pear and two large pearls. The Ottomans also understood the value of the images in these books, and with their proven military superiority, their two-page response was perhaps closer to the realpolitik of the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁶

The images in the Tahmasb *Shahnamah* occasionally inspired Ottoman court painters. Several scenes in Lokman's two-volume *Hunarnamah* (*Book of Accomplishments*) on the lives and deed of the Ottoman sultans (Topkapı Palace Library, H1523-24) dated 1584 and 1588, for example, echo features of the earlier epic in the treatment of trees, flowers, rocks, clouds, birds, and other details.¹⁷ The *Shahnamah* manuscript seems to have been carefully preserved in the palace treasury, although there are no surviving seals or other commentaries or annotations by librarians to attest to its presence until 1800–1801 when Mehmed 'Arif Efendi, keeper of guns at the Topkapı treasury, added synoptic commentaries on polished sheets glued in to face the paintings.¹⁸ Written in Ottoman and perhaps done in consultation with the sultan and his circle, these commentaries served as mnemonic aids encapsulating the text around them. The one glued to this page with *The Court of Gayumars*, for example, opens that according to the Persians, Gayumars was the first prince in the world to adorn crown and throne; they believe he was the direct son of Adam. It then goes off on a tangent talking about the body's limbs and organs and how they have to have a head to control them, perhaps a reference to the Ottoman hierarchy. At the end it returns to Gayumars and his talents in inventing cloth and clothing and his ability to control even wild beasts.¹⁹ It, like the other synopses, suggests that one of the ways of "reading" an illustrated manuscript at the nineteenth-century Ottoman court was to flip through the illustrations, with the reader supplying the intermediate events through his own familiarity with the context of the narrative. But like the illustrations in the original manuscript, these commentaries are also a product of their specific historical times, reflecting the turbulent events and shifting political landscape that resonated with many of the same themes of dynastic succession found in the text of the original epic and in this particular Safavid copy of it. In this way, Mehmed 'Arif was branding the Safavid work of art with a late Ottoman, specifically Sunni, identity.

DISPERSAL IN THE WEST

This sumptuous manuscript, intact with all of its 258 paintings and its original binding, then moved to the West.²⁰ Sometime before 1903, it was brought to Paris, perhaps via Iran.²¹ In France, it entered the collection of Baron Edmond de Rothschild (d. 1934), which then passed to his son Baron Maurice de Rothschild. Two years after his death in 1957, the New York gallery of Rosenberg & Stiebel sold the manuscript to the American magnate Arthur A. Houghton Jr. Former president of Steuben Glass, Houghton was a bibliophile who had underwritten much of the construction costs of the rare book library at Harvard and was president of the Grolier Club in Manhattan, the oldest bibliographic club in the United States. On buying the manuscript, he commissioned the scholars Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch to prepare a lavish monograph that mimicked its original glory: the same large format on heavy paper in two volumes with the dedicatory rosette to Tahmasb on the covers. In the publication, the first volume contained commentary, mainly reconstructing the painters thought to have contributed to the project. The second had full-page collotype plates of all 258 illustrated pages, complete with gold-sprinkled margins and fore-edge gilding, along with eight color plates set in cover sheets somewhat like the Ottoman synopses in the original. To make the plates for the monograph, however, the manuscript had to be unbound, a step that presaged its dispersal.

Small groups of paintings, now framed in silk mats, began to appear in exhibitions, beginning with the Grolier Club in 1962. In the 1960s, the world art market was heating up, and works of Middle Eastern art, especially Persian, were in high demand. The Empress Farah of Iran was a major collector, and works like the *Shahnamah* that reflect the glories of Iranian kingship were particularly popular in this imperial era.²² Houghton, who would divorce his third wife in 1972 and marry his fourth shortly thereafter, began to divest his assets. In 1970 he sold his copy of a Gutenberg Bible to the dealer Hans Kraus, reportedly for \$1-2 million, the highest price paid for a book until that date. At the same time, the Metropolitan Museum of Art was celebrating its centennial, and to mark the occasion, Houghton, then chairman of the board of the trustees, donated seventy-six illustrated folios from the *Shahnamah* manuscript to it. They were displayed in a special exhibition mounted in 1972,²³ and Houghton followed up with a gift of \$500,000 to ensure there was a fitting permanent display for them in the new Islamic galleries set to open in 1975.

Houghton needed to establish a tax value for his charitable donation. In 1975 he is said to have offered to sell the rest of the manuscript (minus the seventy-six paintings given to the Metropolitan Museum, and possibly even including a trade for them) to the Iranian government for \$28.5 million, but the deal fizzled. Instead, he ended up selling the folios piecemeal on the market to establish a unit price.

On November 17, 1976, Houghton offered seven folios for sale at Christie's in London.²⁴ The selection of paintings underscores his reasons for doing so: the seven are attributed to the major painters assigned by Dickson and Welch, three from the first generation and four from the younger one. They were specifically chosen to establish a value for paintings by different hands. The seven works brought in a record £863,500 (the 2014 equivalent of somewhere between £2,034,000 and £3,770,000 or \$3,370,000 to \$6,247,000); the first painting—*The Death of Zahhak* attributed to Sultan-Muhammad—sold for £308,000 (the 2014 equivalent of £1,093,000 to £2,026,000 or \$1,811,000 to \$3,357,000), the highest price paid to date for any work of Islamic art.²⁵

The following year Houghton sold four more illustrated folios to the British Rail Pension Fund, folios that were resold in April 1996 at Sotheby's in London for £1,964,000 (\$2,918,000).²⁶ He also sold some paintings to private individuals, including *The Court of Gayumars*, which was bought by Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan who had amassed one of the finest collections of Islamic—particularly Persian—art, often on the advice of his friend Stuart Cary Welch, coauthor of the monumental monograph on the Tahmasb *Shahnamah*. On Sadrudin's death in 2003, his collection passed to his nephew Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, the forty-ninth imam of the Isma'ili Muslims and the present Aga Khan, who established a museum for the collection in Toronto that opened in September 2014. *The Court of Gayumars* is one of its prize works, along with eight other folios from the Tahmasb *Shahnamah*, the largest single collection extracted from the manuscript other than the ones Houghton gave to the Metropolitan Museum.²⁷

But the manuscript's peregrinations did not end there. Following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the art market changed, and clamor about the manuscript's dismemberment increased. After Houghton's death in 1990, his son Arthur Houghton III decided to sell intact the carcass of the manuscript, including its binding and 118 remaining paintings.²⁸ Complex negotiations through the London dealer Oliver Hoare led to a deal in 1994 with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran to trade the manuscript's remains for a Willem de Kooning painting, *Woman III*.²⁹ Somewhat ironically, Empress Farah had purchased the painting for the Tehran museum in the late 1970s, but representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran deemed its subject matter unsuitable. Following a clandestine trade on the tarmac of the Vienna airport, an incident worthy of a Graham Green spy novel, the manuscript, depleted of some of its finest paintings, was justly returned to its homeland. It was feted as a national treasure, and a new version of the manuscript was unveiled at the Art Cultural Center in Tehran on April 28, 2014.³⁰ Its most famous painting, *The Court of Gayumars*, remains in Toronto, a rich source not just for art historians but also for those interested in history from the premodern period until the present.

NOTES

Many colleagues have assisted me in preparing this essay. In particular, I should like to thank Filiz Cakir Phillip at the Aga Khan Museum; Sheila Canby and Annick Des Roches at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Linda Komaroff and Sandra Williams at LACMA.

1. Given its fame, there is a vast bibliography on this painting, which is regularly reproduced in books and on websites. To simplify here, I have given only the latest, most accessible, or most complete references, which themselves contain many other secondary sources. The basic information is provided on the website of the Aga Khan Museum, <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/court-gayumars-folio-shahnameh-book-kings-shah-tahmasp>.
2. The most convenient English translation of the text is by Dick Davis, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); the latest critical edition is Abu'l Qasim Firdawi, *Shahnama*, ed. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, 8 vols. (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1987–2008).
3. The basis monograph on the manuscript is Martin S. Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). Color reproductions of all the paintings are available in Sheila R. Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), which also gives current locations and accession numbers of all the folios.
4. Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam: 1250–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 168. Robert Hillenbrand, “The Iconography of the *Shah-nama-yi Shahi*,” in *Safavid Persia*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 53–78, discusses the propagandistic function of the manuscript and its images, with its focus on Iran’s war with Turan.
5. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, 92; Hillenbrand, “Iconography of the *Shah-nama-yi Shahi*,” 69n70. Tahmasb himself said that he really became ruler (*padishah*) at Qazvin at the end of 933 (summer 1527); see his memoirs, *Tadhkirah-yi Shah Tahmasp*, ed. D. C. Phillott (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1912), 9. This was a political statement: he mentioned it after a description of the squabbles between the various Qizilbash factions and the ascension of Chuha Sultan. But, as pointed out by A. S. Morton’s introduction to Michele Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539–1542)* (London: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1999), xvi, this was somewhat wishful thinking. Like much of the shah’s memoirs, it was a retrospective view wearing “rosy-colored glasses.”
6. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, 43.
7. Bahram Mirza’s preface is published and translated in Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 4–18, at 16. The passage is slightly amended here for spelling.

8. See, for example, Priscilla Soucek, "Sultan Muhammad Tabrizi: Painter at the Safavid Court," in *Persian Masters: Five Centuries of Persian Painting*, ed. Sheila Canby (Bombay: Marg, 1990), 55–71.
9. Like the Tahmasb *Shahnamah*, this copy of the *Divan* of Hafiz has been disgracefully cut up, in this case by Stuart Cary Welch, author of the monograph on the epic. For details, see Sheila Blair, *Text and Image in Medieval Persian Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 239n37.
10. For the two different people named Dust-Muhammad, see the entries by Chahryar Adle, "Dust-Mohammad Heravi" and "Dust-Mohammad Mosawwer" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dust-mohammad> and <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dust-mohammad-mosawwer>. They give full references to his earlier articles.
11. Colin P. Mitchell, "Tahmasp I," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tahmasp-i>; Sheila R. Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art 1501–1722* (London: British Museum Press, 1999), 40–65; "Safavid Painting," in *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran, 1501–1576*, ed. Jon Thompson and Sheila R. Canby (Milan: Skira, 2003), 73–133.
12. Abolala Soudavar, "Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition," *Iran* 37 (1999), 51–52.
13. Marianna Shreve Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's Haft Awrang: a Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).
14. Linda Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Art, 2011), 17–19.
15. Emine Fetvacı, "The Production of the *Sehname-i Selim Han*," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 263–316.
16. Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan*, 18–19.
17. Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, 4.
18. Unver Rustem, "The Afterlife of a Royal Gift: The Ottoman Inserts of the *Shahnama-i Shah*," *Muqarnas* 29 (2012), 245–337.
19. I thank Wheeler Thackston for providing me with a paraphrase of the synopsis.
20. The manuscript's peregrinations are detailed in Eleanor Munro, "How to Mangle a Masterpiece: The Sad Story of The Houghton *Shahnameh*," *Saturday Review*, October 27, 1979, 21–26, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1979oct27-00021>.
21. Sheila R. Canby, *Princes, Poets & Paladins: Islamic and Indian Paintings from the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 47, mentions a possible sojourn in the Qajar royal library but does not indicate why she thinks so.
22. Interest in Persian art peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, a heyday enthusiastically promoted by the monarchy as part of its quest for legitimacy and culminating in the grandiose celebration (*jashn*) hosted by the Shah in October 1971 to celebrate 2,500 years of Persian monarchy. It affected art book publishing, with a third edition of the *Survey of Persian Art* appearing in 1977; see Sheila Blair, "Surveying Persian Art in Light of a Survey of Persian Art," in *A. U. Pope and His Legacy*, ed. Yuka Kadoi (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 383–89.

23. Stuart Cary Welch, *A King's Book of Kings: The Shah-nameh of Shah Tahmasp* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972).
24. Christie, Manson & Woods, Ltd., *Seven Folios from the Houghton Shahnameh* (London: Christie's, 1976). The seven were *The Death of Zakhak* (fol. 37b), attributed to Sultan Muhammad; *Firdawsi and the Court Poets of Ghazna* (fol. 7a), attributed to Aqa Mirak; *The Nightmare of Zakhak* (fol. 28b), attributed to Mir Musavvir; *Nushirwan Receives an Embassy from the King of Hind* (fol. 638a), attributed to Mirza 'Ali; *Qaran Slays Barman* (fol. 102b), attributed to Sultan-Muhammad assisted by Mir Sayyid 'Ali; *Sam Returns with Zal* (fol. 64b), attributed to Painter A, perhaps Qadimi; and *The Vision of Siyavush* (fol. 259b), attributed to Painter A, perhaps Qadimi, and Painter D, perhaps 'Abd al-'Aziz.
25. Prices were calculated on www.measuringworth.com; the figures indicate the historic opportunity cost and the economic cost, respectively. The conversion to 2014 dollars is given at www.oanda.com.
26. Souren Melikian, "Destroying a Treasure: The Sad Story of a Manuscript," *New York Times*, April 27, 1996, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/27/style/27iht-lon.t_3.html.
27. In addition to folio 20 with *The Court of Gayumars*, Canby's list (*Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, 282–87) credits the Aga Khan Museum with folio 7 with *Firdawsi Entertains the Court Poets of Ghazna* (AKM 00156), folio 37 with *The Death of Zakhak* (AKM 00155), folio 53 with *Salm and Tur Receive the Reply of Faridun and Manuchihr* (AKM 00495), folio 84 with *Sindukht Comes to Sam Bearing Gifts* (AKM 00496), folio 294 with *Rustam Pursues Akhvan* (AKM 00162), folio 341 with *The First Joust of the Rooks: Fariburz Versus Kalbad* (AKM 00497), folio 402 with *Gushtasp Slays the Dragon of Mount Saqila* (AKM 00163), and folio 521 with *The Story of Haftvad and the Worm* (AKM 00164).
28. Melik Kaylan, "Clandestine Trade," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204770404577082842506737230>.
29. The painting was bought by the entertainment magnate David Geffen, who sold it at Christie's in 2006 to the hedge fund billionaire Steven A. Cohen for roughly \$137.5 million; see Carol Vogel, "Landmark De Kooning Crowns Collection," November 18, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/18/arts/design/landmark-de-kooning-crowns-collection.html>.
30. The event was noted on several press websites including *PressTV*, <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2014/04/27/360289/iran-to-unveil-shah-tahmasp-shahnameh/>; and *On Viewpoint*, <http://onviewpoint.com/new-edition-of-shahnameh-of-shah-tahmasp-unveiled-in-tehran/>.

FURTHER READING

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II. The Making of a Legendary Calligrapher

TEXTUAL PORTRAITS OF SHEIKH HAMDULLAH

ESRA AKIN-KIVANÇ

Ottoman art history written between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries unanimously describe Sheikh Hamdullah, son of Mustafa Dede, as the most prominent calligrapher of the sixteenth century and commend him with the epithet “The Second Yaqut” (yaqut = a precious ruby; the first yaqut being Jamal al-Din Yaqut al-Musta’simi, the preeminent calligrapher of the thirteenth century).¹ These texts state that Sheikh Hamdullah was born in the city of Amasya and died in Istanbul. They do not, however, provide specific dates for his birth or death. Rather, in line with the common practice of premodern Ottoman art-historical writing, they estimate the artist’s age by aligning major episodes in his life (such as his relocation in Istanbul) with the historical events of the period (for example, Bayezid II’s ascension to the throne). The dates suggested for Sheikh Hamdullah’s birth range between 1426 and 1436. The date of death carved on his headstone at the Karacaahmed Cemetery in Istanbul, the year 927 (1520–21), is a later addition inscribed at an unknown date and thus is not reliable.² Deducing from the artist’s signature on his presumably last dated work, some premodern authors have argued that he must have died at the age of eighty-eight. Others, however, suggest that Sheikh Hamdullah had reached “the blessed age of” one hundred and ten.³ Assuming that he lived for eighty-eight or one hundred and ten years, and that his birth occurred either in 1426 or 1436, his death can be placed between 1514 and 1536, or between 1524 and 1546 (figure 11.2).



FIGURE 11.2 Album of calligraphy, page showing *ahadith* (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) inscribed in *naskh* and *muhaqqaq* scripts by Sheikh Hamdullah.

Artist: Shaikh Hamdullah ibn Mustafa Dede (d. 1520)

Date: c. 1500

Place of origin: Attributed to Istanbul, Turkey

Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Edwin Binney 3rd and Edward Ablat Gifts, 1982. 1982.120.3.

The earliest known art-historical text that provides an account of Sheikh Hamdullah's life and career is Mustafa Âli's *Menakıb-ı Hunerveran* (*Epic Deeds of Artists*).⁴ With a completion date of 1587, *Menakıb* comes more than seven decades after the calligrapher's death if, indeed, Sheikh Hamdullah died in the year 1514. Even if we accept the latest proposed date for his demise (1546), it is striking that the first written biography of such an eminent calligrapher did not appear until four decades after his death. Belated though it may be, Mustafa Âli's account of Sheikh Hamdullah describes, in both content and structure, the artist's preeminence in indisputably clear and direct terms. In the lineage of artists (*silsile*) that Mustafa Âli provides, Sheikh Hamdullah's account is placed at the beginning of the line of "Seven Masters of Rum" (the masters born and who practiced in Ottoman lands), which, he, in turn, places immediately following the narratives of the "Seven Masters" of Persian calligraphy. The implications of this deliberate positioning are twofold. First, this hierarchic arrangement serves Mustafa Âli's broader agenda of asserting Ottoman artists as equals in skill and accomplishment with the much-admired and rivaled Persian masters. And second, it firmly establishes Sheikh Hamdullah as the pioneer among the so-called Seven Masters of Rum. Mustafa Âli's account reads as follows:

Now, the abovementioned Sheikh Hamdullah came to Rum during the reign of Sultan Bayezid Khan, son of Sultan Mehmed Khan, and received an appointment of fifty aspers per day. He was the intimate confidant of the late Sultan Bayezid Khan and an acclaimed companion, envied by [the Sultan's] viziers. He passed away in the time of Sultan Selim Khan [II], the conqueror of Egypt, and the veneration that was accorded to him amongst the calligraphers of Rum was [never] extended to [any] others. And they said of him:

COUPLET

Ever since the calligraphy of Hamdi, son of sheikh, appeared,
The writings of Yaqut have surely vanished from the world.⁵

A standard entry in the *Menakıb*, this passage records the artist's place of origin and his salary and comments on Sheikh Hamdullah's relationships with his patrons and rivals. The introduction to the couplet, which praises the artist as superior even to the "peerless" Yaqut al-Musta'simi, indicates that the verse was not Mustafa Âli's own composition but had been passed down to him orally. This particular couplet is cited in every written source about Sheikh Hamdullah composed after the *Menakıb*.

Writing nearly six decades after Mustafa Âli, calligrapher Nefeszade İbrahim (d. 1650), son of Mustafa Nefeszade (himself a calligrapher, who, like Sheikh Hamdullah, was born in Amasya), expanded upon Mustafa Âli's account and provided in his *Gülzar-ı Savab* (*Rose Garden of Proper Conduct*) the most extensive narrative

of the life and work of the celebrated calligrapher by an Ottoman author. The text exists in various manuscript copies housed today in the libraries and archives in Istanbul. Although a heavily edited version dating to 1728–29 written in the hand of the famous calligrapher and biographer Müstakimzade Süleyman (1717–1787)⁶ has been transcribed in an unpublished critical edition of the text in modern Turkish,⁷ this important primary source has never been subjected to critical analysis and has hitherto been unavailable to researchers in any language other than modern Turkish.

The English translation that follows uses the oldest extant version of *Gulzar*, copied in 1656, six years after the death of Nefeszade İbrahim. Housed in the Âli Emiri collection at the Millet Kütüphanesi in Istanbul, the manuscript is identified with the siglum AE 808 and titled *Risale-i Hutut* (*Treatise of Calligraphies*). Sheikh Hamdullah's account is found on folios 24b–33b. The author's original work is missing, so it is impossible to determine the variants between this copy and the holograph.

In addition to presenting *Gülzar* to readers of English, this essay introduces a new version of the text. Cited only in Âli Haydar Bayat's annotated bibliography of written sources on calligraphy and never before examined, this copy is preserved in the Hacı Mahmud collection at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul.⁸ The last portion of a large *mecmua*, the text identified with the siglum HM 3916 contains thirteen sections and is titled *Tafsil-i Ahval es'Sultanü'l-Hattatin Hazret-i Hamdullah el-Ma'ruf bi-lbnü'l-Şeyh* (A Detailed Account of His Excellency Hamdullah, the Sultan of Calligraphers, Known as Son of the Sheikh). This text lacks a colophon indicating the name of the copyist and the date of composition. However, based on the oldest datable text in the *mecmua*, a copy of Silahtar İbrahim Pasha's *Nabî'ye Mektup* (Letter to Nabî), it is possible to suggest the end of the eighteenth century as *terminus post quem* for the codex.⁹

The version of *Gülzar* introduced in this essay for the first time displays a number of variants, which make it plausible that it may have originated from a copy other—and possibly older—than the abovementioned AE 808, the oldest version known to us. These variants include omissions of some words, occasional shifting of the placement of words in a given sentence, differences in expressions, and a marginal note in the same hand as that of the main text that indicates the specific burial place of the calligrapher as being “in the middle cemetery, near Taşcılar in Üsküdar.”

An examination of these variants helps construct three scenarios about the lineage of *Gülzar*'s extant versions. The first and least likely possibility is that AE 808 and *Tafsil-i Ahval* both descend from a lost copy that predates 1656, the date of completion of AE 808. Variants between AE 808 and *Tafsil-i Ahval* indicate that the lost version was not the author's holograph but a later copy, possibly of the holograph. The variants between AE 808 and *Tafsil-i Ahval* suggest a second and more plausible possibility—that *Tafsil-i Ahval* descends from a now-lost copy, which in turn originated from another lost copy, the antecedent of AE 808. Finally, the most

likely possibility is that AE 808 and *Tafsil-i Ahval* descend from two separate and now lost versions that might have been copied from the author's holograph. The strongest indication of a date for *Tafsil-i Ahval* earlier than that of AE 808 is the presence in it of a sentence that comments on Sheikh Hamdullah's self-regard.¹⁰ The somewhat delicate content of this sentence, discussed below, suggests that it was part of an early, and still not fully edited and refined, version of *Gülzar* rather than a later addition. Its absence in all other versions of *Gülzar* (as well as in other texts that contain information about Sheikh Hamdullah) makes it likely that this omission was not an oversight but a deliberate choice by one of the later copyists who considered any indication of hubris as unbefitting of an exemplar calligrapher such as Sheikh Hamdullah is portrayed to be.

Whatever the relationships among various versions of the text might be, the discovery of *Tafsil-i Ahval* suggests the existence of a now-lost antecedent of *Gülzar* that is older than AE 808. A comparative analysis of the twenty-four extant versions of *Gülzar* is necessary to determine the validity of this supposition with certainty. If *Tafsil-i Ahval* does prove to be older than AE 808, however, this would shorten the unusually long sixty-nine-year period between 1587 (the completion date of the *Menakıb*) and 1656 (the completion date of AE 808), during which, to this date, we have had no trace of an Ottoman art-historical text.

A study of Sheikh Hamdullah's life and works through various texts that were composed after *Gülzar*, including art-historical treatises such as Suyolcuzade Mehmed Necib's *Devhatü'l-Küttab* (The Lofty Tree of Scribes),¹¹ Müstakimzade Süleyman's *Tuhfe-i-Hattatin* (Choice Gift of Calligraphers),¹² Kebecizade Mustafa Hilmi Efendi's *Mizan-ı Hat* (Scale of Calligraphy), Habibullah Fazaili's *Atlas-ı Hat* (Atlas of Calligraphy),¹³ as well as works of history such as *Amasya Tarihi* (History of Amasya)¹⁴ and *Tezkire-i Rumat* (Treatise on Archery, an account of Sheikh Hamdullah's renown as archer; figure 11.3),¹⁵ reveal how authors from one generation to the next appropriated, altered, and renarrated the artist's biography. A thorough understanding of the connections among these individual texts is of critical importance for students and scholars of Ottoman and Islamic art.

According to primary sources, Sheikh Hamdullah came from an esteemed and devout family. His father, Mustafa Dede, as a revered member of the Suhrawardi dervish order, was known as "Sheikh Efendi," which sobriquet was later assigned to his son Hamdullah.¹⁶ Sheikh Hamdullah's mother, equally pious, is commended for never nursing her children without first taking ablution.¹⁷ Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), who was acquainted with the calligrapher's parents while serving as governor in Amasya, highly respected his father and sought the blessings of his mother. Thanks to the prominence of his parents, Hamdullah earned the amity of the future sultan when he resided in Amasya, and even instructed him in calligraphy.

Though they neglected descriptions of the calligrapher's prolific artwork in terms other than dictated by the literary canons of eulogy (such as, "supreme," "flawless," and "novel"), authors of vernacular texts exerted tangible, if hitherto undetected, efforts in the construction of Sheikh Hamdullah's persona. Intriguing discrepancies



FIGURE 11.3 A *muthanna* (symmetrically mirrored composition) in *naskh* script by Sheikh Hamdullah, featuring part of Qur'an, surah 61:13 ("Help from God and a speedy victory. So give glad tidings to the believers").

Source: Ms. A 6489

Artist: Shaikh Hamdullah ibn Mustafa Dede (d. 1520)

Place of origin: Turkey

Credit: İstanbul University Rare Books Library.

among the calligrapher's biographies found in *Gülzar* and in later texts by various authors reveal that textual portraits of the legendary artist were scripted more than once, and with discretion.

One version of Sheikh Hamdullah's biography narrated by authors after Nefeszade, for instance, states that Bayezid II invited the calligrapher to Istanbul after assuming the throne and privileged his former instructor by allocating to him a private workspace inside the Topkapı Palace and by rewarding him with villages in Üsküdar. According to the version that Nefeszade recounts in *Gülzar*, however, Sheikh Hamdullah migrated to the capital without the sultan's knowledge: after Sheikh Hamdullah arrived in Istanbul, one day someone from the palace asked him to write a calligraphic specimen for him, which he then presented to the sultan, who, upon viewing it, recognized Hamdullah's hand and ordered that he be found and brought to his presence. This seemingly subtle variance in the story, which communicates to the reader that the calligrapher had always been in the company of his patron, rather than being reunited with him as a result of a happy coincidence, attests to the later author's desire to construct a narrative of an ideal patron-protégé relationship that would serve as a model for contemporary and future generations of rulers and artists. At the same time, the early version accounted in *Gülzar* suggests that the renowned calligrapher's ascension in rank might not have taken place as straightforwardly as we have come to believe, although Sultan Bayezid's reverence for him as a person and as an artist is evident in many aspects of his life and career.

In their attempt to render a portrait of a supremely flawless artist, not only did premodern authors alter the content, flow, and form of the narratives they inherited from their predecessors orally or in writing, but they also erased them when they deemed it convenient to do so. The elimination in later texts of a brief detail that appears in *Gülzar* as part of a conversation said to have taken place between Sheikh Hamdullah and Bayezid II points to the significance in art-historical writing of not only what is recorded but also what has been expunged.

According to *Gülzar*, after bringing the calligrapher to the palace, one day the sultan "inquire[d] about the might of Yaqut al-Musta'simi's knowledge and the strength of his hand in calligraphy and in penmanship." As AE 808 states, "The late sheikh had the presumption that he might be an equal of, or even better than, Musta'simi." Upon hearing Sheikh Hamdullah's response and pretensions, the decorous sultan, who must not have been pleased, commented, "You have not seen Musta'simi's written work that he inscribed with great care," and he handed the calligrapher works by Yaqut, encouraging him to create an even finer style. It is likely that Nefeszade included the remark about Hamdullah's "presumption that he might be an equal of, or even better than, Musta'simi" to illustrate the stages of a calligrapher's path to perfection in skill and in character. The omission of this sentence from the narratives of later authors and copyists (whose content strongly suggests editorial preference) might have been prompted by their taking Nefeszade's remarks at face value, thus interpreting the calligrapher's conceit as unseemly; tradition made it quite clear that propriety was an indispensable virtue of a good calligrapher.

Alternatively, later authors and copyists might have been concerned that the subtle point Nefeszade tried to make might be misunderstood. Or, if Nefeszade was indeed recounting a truthful aspect of Sheikh Hamdullah's temperament, at least during his early- and mid-career, they might have displayed prudence in selecting the individual colors of the ideal artist's portrait that they had set out to paint.

As more primary texts become available in transcription and translation, their critical analyses not as autonomous texts but as literally dialogic intertexts will help reveal the workings and reworkings of their creative process.¹⁸ Biographies of artists are luminous manifestations of Bakhtin's statement, "any text is the absorption and transformation of another."¹⁹ An important and immediate task that awaits researchers of Ottoman art is to identify the "inside" as well as the "outside" of primary texts, along with their contextual and linguistic matrices within which they function by means of "inversion, conversion, expansion, and juxtaposition."²⁰

TRANSLATION

Following these, [there was] the pole of scribes, the rose-garden of the meadow of good conduct and the peacock of the spring of disciples, angel-natured, abode of return, Sheikh Hamdullah son of Mustafa Dede—*May the mercy of God the Most High and Noble be upon him!* [He] emerged in the city of Amasya. On the path of beginning and development, he studied from the calligraphic samples (*meşq*) of Hayreddin Maraşî—*May God illuminate his resting place*. After that, he collected the calligraphic works of the late ['Abdullah] Sayrafî,²¹ which he excellently adopted and emulated in his own writing. Afterward, garnering the perfect aspects of the writings of the cynosure of scribes, Cemaleddin Yaquṭ [al-Musta'simî], and practicing and examining them with scrutiny as well, [he] seized all the secrets of the art of writing, and reached perfection.

At that time, His Excellency Sultan Bayezid [II] Khan—*May God's mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—was a governor. Offering him affection and displaying loyalty, the late sheikh used to send to [Bayezid] at times supplications (*evrad*) and litanies (*ezkar*) and at other times variegated calligraphic specimens [in his own hand]. His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan—*May God's mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—showed him affection in kind.

It was known to [Sultan Bayezid] that the late Mustafa Dede, the the late sheikh's honorable father, was an enlightened *pir*²² and an exalted man of unprecedented [rank] within the Suhrawardî dervish order. In his days of youth, as he was wandering in the city of Amasya with the desire of getting married, the father of the sheikh, the late Mustafa Dede, met a man from among those to whom God's secrets had been revealed. That person gave him advice saying, "O Dede! The one you will marry is the daughter of a poor woman in the so-and-so neighborhood, and no one else. Marry her at once, without hesitation!" Complying with that noble man's

advice, the late Mustafa Dede married the orphan of that poor woman. When he met that noble man again, [Mustafa Dede] inquired about his wisdom. Raising his hand, that exalted man recited prayers and responded, “Because you heeded my entreaty and married the orphan of that righteous and destitute woman, may God the Glorified [give] you a worthy child whose knowledge will be perfect, whose virtues will be famous in every city and known at all times, and whose renown will last until the Day of Judgment. And [may] his name [be] Hamdullah!” [With these words] he pointed out [Hamdullah’s fate] with prayers. With God’s grace, the exact same [fate] unfolded and in [the year] 886 (1481–82), the late sheikh attained distinction in the city of Amasya, and his writing also earned [him] acclaim.

In the aforementioned year, at the time when Sultan Bayezid Khan—*May God’s mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—set out from his governorate [in Amasya] for the throne of the Exalted Place [that is, the capital], and after he returned to Istanbul when the sultanate of the empire passed down to him, the late sheikh too left his home and arrived in Istanbul. [There] he settled in the house on the dead end across from the Kadiasker Hammam near Eski Odalar, where Cemaleddin Amasi and ‘Abdullah Amasi were residing. [One day] a person from the Royal Gate [that is, the Topkapı Palace] arrived and had the late sheikh write a brief note (*ruq’a*), which he [then] presented to the sultan. Upon seeing the writing of the late [sheikh], His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan, possessor of knowledge, thought of bringing him as well, and declared, “Find the scribe of this writing!” And bringing him [to his side], he greatly enjoyed [the sheikh’s] conversations and appointed him scribe and instructor at his Imperial Palace. Out of great affection for the late sheikh, he allocated a space in his esteemed private quarters where [the calligrapher] could inscribe the Qur’an in solitude, and where [the sultan] could converse with him intimately.

One day, that Abode of Majesty Sultan Bayezid Khan—*May God’s mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—honored [the sheikh] with a visit, [and] inquired about the might of Yaqut al-Musta’simi’s knowledge and the strength of his hand in calligraphy and in penmanship. The late sheikh had the presumption that he might be an equal of, or even better than, Musta’simi. Stating, “You have not seen Musta’simi’s written work that he inscribed with great care,” Sultan Bayezid Khan handed [the sheikh] seven known and famous pages [inscribed] in black that were preserved in his Imperial Treasury. When the sultan uttered, “It would have been delightful and heart-pleasing had there been created a special style (*tarz-ı hass*) finer than and superior to this style of Yaqut,” the late sheikh took the said pages and spent forty days in isolation, studying and practicing with them, advancing thus [his] hand at the station of the field of [inscribing] pages and sheets without resting for many days. After galloping [as such], the steed of the superior ornament [that is, skill] of his hand reached such a station that it was evident that in style (*şive*) and elegance, [his writing] had become finer than and superior to that of Yaqut, also with regard to [monetary] worth and value. As a matter of fact, this verse has been said about him:

Ever since the calligraphy of Hamdi, son of sheikh, appeared,
 The writings of Yaqut have surely vanished from the world.
May God's mercy be upon his soul and [may He] increase His blessings!

This verse too has been said about him:

The sheikh, possessor of a style of superior prowess,
 Reflection of the countenance of the essence of pure ruby (*yaqut*).

The late sheikh was such a master of exalted fame and [so] laudable that the fact that in various *naskh* and in the Six Scripts he [had a] prolific pen and a praiseworthy style is well known throughout the world.²³ Being unique in an entire century with superior calligraphy is [an achievement] that only he was able to attain. Furthermore, he possessed [knowledge in] all sciences (*'ulum*), [in] the sciences of the Arabic [language], and was learned in any and every [matter]. On the path of sheikhs, he was a follower of Suhrawardi. He was highly talented in hawk and falcon hunting, as well as in swimming. He was proficient in sewing garments and in the art (*'ilm*) of pulling bows and shooting arrows. And in his age, the art of discus throwing²⁴ was also his specialty.

When [he lived] in the city of Amasya, he had also become famous in archery. After he arrived in the city of Istanbul, he placed the first shooting range that still exists at Yıldız in Okmeydanı, and practiced and trained at the said square. When [the sheikh's activities] reached the blessed [and] noble ears of His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan—*May God's mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—thanks to the late sheikh's good fortune,²⁵ [the sultan] endowed the said square to the archers. [The presence there] of the late sheikh's aforementioned archery range made possible this endowment.

Additionally, [the sheikh] had such superior talent in tailoring that one day he sewed a kaftan out of white cloth for His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan, and stitched it in such a way that it was immaculately seamless, and presented it to the sultan. It was immensely praised and likened to the chemise of the Angel Ridwan.²⁶

And in swimming, too, he was so advanced that, as the story goes, one day as His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan was at worship [as he did] in summer days at the pavilion on the banks of Rumili, the late sheikh saw him from the shores of Üsküdar. Undressing and holding his wallet in his mouth, [the sheikh] crossed the tide[s] without getting it wet. Responsibility [for the truthfulness of the story] belongs to the [original] narrator.

He wrote forty-seven Noble Qur'ans, one Noble *Mashariq*,²⁷ one Noble *Masabih*,²⁸ and an[other] Noble *Mashariq*, which he inscribed on gazelle skin. Other than these, he penned Noble *Enam*,²⁹ Noble *Kehf*,³⁰ supplications (*evrad*) and litanies (*ezkar*) numbering one thousand, numerous scrolls, as well as countless calligraphic specimens and books so conscientiously that for students of calligraphy

they are each a heart-pleasing [work] like an ornamental verse (*qit'a*) from the meadow of Heaven or an apostle that comes to [one's] aide.

As the story goes, one day, His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan—*May God's mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—had gathered the grand ulema, who were compilers and editors [of books], and [he] invited the late sheikh, as well. {The books arranged} by them [that is, the ulema] were present and placed over {the said sultan's} chest.³¹ [The sultan] had pointed the late sheikh to a seat above everyone else, and introduced him to the ulema. Realizing with wisdom that [this arrangement] caused grief in these [ulema], [the sultan] brought out the Qur'an that the late sheikh had inscribed, and had each and every one present peruse it. After perfect commending [of the sheikh's inscription], when [the sultan] asked them, "Did any king of old times possess such an esteemed calligrapher and scribe of prosperous pen?" they fully approved of His Excellency Bayezid Khan's opinion. Placing the elegant books of the aforementioned ulema on top of one another over the chest, His Excellency Bayezid Khan addressed the said ulema [and asked], "Shall we place the mentioned Qur'an under these books, or is it appropriate to place it over them?" They responded saying, "How can it be permissible to place a book or anything else above the Exalted Qur'an, about the lofty glory of which it has been ordered: 'Which none shall touch / But those who are clean: / A Revelation from the Lord / Of the Worlds?'"³² And His Excellency—*May God's mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—Sultan Bayezid Khan declared this about the late sheikh, with persuasion and wit: "This person's esteemed [deeds] are plenty, and there is no individual who has given such life to the inscription of the Holy [and] Exalted Qur'an. How could we seat this person below you?" It is narrated that, upon [hearing these words], [the ulema] were ashamed, and knowing what a considerate [person] Sultan Bayezid Khan was, they conciliated their pride in their knowledge,³³ and asked for God's pardon and forgiveness.

And some say that [the sheikh] was the envy of all the viziers and [at the same time] their prosperous confidant and scribe. And these words that he pronounces in most of his signatures are evidence of his perfect attachment [to the Ottoman house]: "O you who shows mercy with proper justice! See how, why, and with what did this scribe of the sultan, son of Sultan [Mehmed II], Sultan Bayezid Khan,³⁴ inscribe when his hand trembled and his hair grew gray when his age reached eighty some years!" This is how he asked for forgiveness and signed [his work] until the end [of his life]. What they mean by "some" is [years ranging] from three to nine. As a matter of fact, the story of Joseph—*Peace be upon him*—in the Noble Qur'an relates ". . . some years," but there is dispute over the actual [number] of years [meant by] "some."³⁵ And it should be known that based on the meaning [of the word "some"] provided here, when the late sheikh's noble age was eighty-eight, his blessed noble head began to tremble immensely, but God the Glorious spared his blessed noble hands from shaking. In his old age, he wrote just as beautifully as he did in his young age. This miracle is a testament to his perfect qualities. And at

times, signing the words, “Hamdullah, tried by various misfortunes” [that is, spiritual trials], he complained of the times, and described himself as [the perpetrator of] various sins. And at other times, he identified [himself with the words,] “Written by Hamdullah, little in stature and hefty in sin.” At times, withdrawing from writing and entering a state of ecstasy, he departed from his home and household for days, worshipped at Aqbaba and Alemdağı, fully withdrawing from this world’s affairs at the tomb of Mustafa Çelebi, son of Sarı Qadı Sultan, who was the son of [Hamdullah’s] own sheikh. His Excellency the Saint Sultan Bayezid used to send out men [after him] to bring [the sheikh] back. And [a copy of] the lineage of sheikhs [composed by] the said Mustafa Çelebi that the late sheikh inscribed in *thuluth* script is still extant. Between the lines [of the text] are noble *ahadith* written in [the sheikh’s] hand.

And some say that in addition to his appointment [at the Palace], the late sheikh owned a couple of villages (*qarye*) in the district of Üsküdar, and one village was assigned to the seal pressers (*mührezenler*). For that reason [that is, the rewards that the sultan bestowed upon the sheikh], it has been said that the real scribe of the inscriptions was not the sheikh, but perhaps His Excellency the Saint Sultan Bayezid Khan, who time and again held the former’s ink-pot, arranged his cushion [behind him] in support, and recited prayers.

Now, nobody doubts or questions [the fact that] the sheikh’s accomplishment of perfect erudition and his peerlessness in calligraphy and in beautiful penmanship has been an exclusive blessing of the lofty patronage and prayers of goodness of His Excellency Sultan Bayezid Khan. In accordance with the honorable verse, {“While that which is for the good of humankind remains on the earth,”}³⁶ he lived one hundred and ten years; and in keeping with [that] elegant noble verse, God the Glorious the Most High increased his life span on the face of the earth. Some say that the late sheikh reached the last years of His Excellency Sultan Selim Khan, conqueror of Egypt—*May God’s mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—but the true account is that it [that is, his death] must have occurred in the noble times of Sultan Suleiman Khan Ghazi—*May God’s mercy and forgiveness be upon him*.

Monla Şemseddin Pir and Dervish Çelebi, a disciple of Abdullah Amasi, recount that at that time, His Excellency the sheikh had reached quite an old age and used to write wearing two or three pairs of eyeglasses [at the same time]. In fact, one day, His Excellency Sultan Suleiman Khan—*May God’s mercy and forgiveness be upon him*—wished to have a Noble *mushaf* copied [for himself]. He invited His Excellency the sheikh and had him brought to his felicitous presence. Observing that [the sheikh] had become quite *pir*, (that is, old) [the sultan] received his blessings and sent him [back] to his home. Then when he ordered that “There is no writing equal to that of this saint. Yet, what we need [now] is writing that is of pure strength and of no fault,” Celalzade Muhiyeddin Amasi, who had quite a hand [like] steel, was brought over and charged with the copying of a Noble *mushaf* [for the sultan].

NOTES

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1. Yaqut al-Musta'simi is known for having perfected Ibn Muqla's calligraphic system by replacing the straight-cut nib of the reed pen with an obliquely cut one, thereby creating a new, extremely delicate style. This invention earned al-Musta'simi the epithet of "cynosure of calligraphers." For an account of al-Musta'simi by Mustafa Âli of Gallipoli, see Esra Akin-Kıvanç, ed. and trans., *Mustafa Âli's Epic Deeds of Artists: A Critical Edition of the Earliest Ottoman Text About the Calligraphers and Painters of the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), introduction and 188–89. For another account of the calligrapher by the Persian author Qadi Ahmad, see Vladimir Minorsky, ed., *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, Son of Mir-Munshi (circa A. H. 1015 / A. D. 1606)* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1959), 57–58.
2. For a detailed discussion of the inscription as well as for old and contemporary photographs of the tombstone with and without the inscription, see Muhittin Serin, *Hattat Şeyh Hamdullah* (1992; repr., Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2007), 38–39.
3. Serin, *Hattat Seyh Hamdullah*, 38–39.
4. Akin-Kıvanç, *Mustafa Âli's Epic Deeds of Artists*.
5. Akin-Kıvanç, *Mustafa Âli's Epic Deeds of Artists*, 199, 202.
6. Müstakimzade Süleyman Sadeddin Efendi, *Tuhfe-i Hattatin*, ed. İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1928), 1717–87), renowned historian of the eighteenth century and author of nearly one hundred and fifty works. For a detailed biography, see İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal's İnal's introduction to Müstakimzade Süleyman Sadeddin Efendi, *Tuhfe-i Hattatin* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1928), and Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), 1552.
7. Fehime Demir, "Türk Hat Sanatı İçin Kaynak Gülzâr-ı Savab (İncelemeli Metin Çevirisi)" (master's thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, İstanbul, 2004).
8. Âli Haydar Bayat, *Açıklamalı Hüsn-i Hat Bibliyografyası Yazmalar-Kitaplar-Makaleler Kitaplarda Hatla İlgili Bölümler-Dış Ülkelerdeki Yayınlar* (İstanbul: İslam Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi, 2002).
9. For Silahtar İbrahim Paşa, see İbrahim Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* IV/1, 405–406. (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurum, 1956). For Nabi (1642–1712), see Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 4, 1219.
10. The sentence reads, "The late sheikh had the presumption that he might be an equal of, or even better than, Musta'simi."
11. Suyolcuzade Mehmed Necib, *Devha-tül-Küttâb*, ed. Kilisli Muallim Rifat (İstanbul: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi Neşriyatından 16, 1942).

12. Müstakimzade Süleyman Sadeddin Efendi, *Tuhfe-i Hattatin*.
13. Habibullah Fazaili, *Atlas-ı Khatt* (Isfahan: Kitabfurushi Shahriyar, 1971–72).
14. Abdi-Zade Hüseyin Hüsameddin, *Amasya Tarihi*, ed. Âli Yılmaz and Mehmet Akkuş (Ankara: Amasya Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1986).
15. Ankara Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Library, Yazmalar ms. 44891.
16. A Sufi order that traces its origin back to Abu'l Najib Suhrawardi (1097–1168), disciple of Ahmad Ghazali (d. 1126). For more on the order, see *Encyclopedia of Islam* online.
17. Kemal Edip Ünsel, “Tezkire-i Rumat” (Atıcılar Tezkiresi), *Tarih Vesikaları* 3, no. 15 (1949): 171–82.
18. Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000, 2001), 29, 109.
19. Allen, *Intertextuality*, 37.
20. Allen, *Intertextuality*, 115.
21. For an account of the life and works of ‘Abdullah Sayrafi, see, Akın-Kıvanç, *Mustafa Âli’s Epic Deeds of Artists*, 108, 121, 128, 190–91, 193, 194, 283.
22. Old and wise person.
23. For discussions of these scripts, see Akın-Kıvanç, *Mustafa Âli’s Epic Deeds of Artists*, 159–287.
24. In some versions of the text, the word is *remil*, the art of sand writing, or geomancy.
25. *Sebeb-i bahtlari ile*. In other versions, *sebeb-i muhabbetleri ile* (out of his affection for [the sheikh]).
26. According to traditions, Ridwan is the angel who guards the gates of heaven.
27. Book of hadiths.
28. Book of litanies.
29. The title of the sixth chapter of the Qur’an. Also a collection of the frequently read Qur’anic chapters and verses.
30. The name of the eighteenth chapter of the Qur’an.
31. Passages taken from other versions of the text are placed within curly brackets {}. My own additions to the text for sake of clarity are indicated within normal brackets [].
32. Qur’an 56:79–80.
33. Alternatively, “they surrendered to [the sultan’s] assurance in his [own] knowledge” (*gurur-ı ilmlerine insaf edup*).
34. Reading this sentences as, “See how, why, and with what did this scribe of the sultan, son of Sultan Bayezid Khan, . . .” some Turkish scholars proposed that Sheikh Hamdullah addressed himself as “the son of the Sultan.” Although absence of punctuation may have led to this misreading, it is clear from the context that the word “son” identifies Bayezid as a sultan of sultan, meaning his father Mehmed II. Additionally, given Sheikh Hamdullah’s age, such a sobriquet seems implausible.
35. The word is *biz’a*. In Qur’an 12:42, Yusuf Âli translates *biz’a sinin* as “a few (more) years.” “And of the two / To that one whom he considered / About to be saved, he said, / ‘Mention me to thy Lord,’ / But Satan made him forget / To mention him to his lord: / And [Joseph] lingered in prison / A few [more] years.”
36. Qur’an, second to last part of 13:17. The blank space that the copyist of AE 808 left, possibly to write in a different color of ink, was never filled in. The verse is found in other versions of *Gülzar*.

FURTHER READING

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III. Deccani Seals and Scribal Notations

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF INDO-PERSIAN BOOK ARTS AND COLLECTING (C. 1400–1680)

KEELAN OVERTON AND JAKE BENSON

Visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's groundbreaking 2015 exhibition—*Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy*—were probably struck by the technical sophistication, enigma, and seemingly “one of a kind” status of many of the artworks on view.¹ In terms of single-page paintings, arguably one of the Deccan's most famous artistic products, most of the examples in the show were framed on the wall as individual objects and presented through the eye of Mark Zebrowski, whose *Deccani Painting* established the foundation for the field.² Encountering hundreds of paintings ruptured from their original context in a bound album and bearing little or no evidence of production, such as a date or signature, Zebrowski pursued a formal approach based in exhaustive connoisseurship. The result was the grouping of paintings according to the hands of anonymous artists: for example, the “The Bodleian Painter,” so-called after his masterpiece in Oxford's Bodleian Library depicting a Bijapuri hilltop shrine (*dargah*).³ The Metropolitan exhibition also included a number of manuscripts, and in some cases, basic details of production were likewise ambiguous. In the case of a lavishly illuminated, mid-sixteenth century Qur'an manuscript now in Kuwait, for example, the calligrapher 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni is known from his signature in the concluding *falnama* (lit., book of divination, here in reference to an illuminated finispiece), but where exactly the potentially peripatetic scribe copied the manuscript—Iran or India, Shiraz or Golconda—remains debatable.⁴

The above enigmas surrounding production, combined with bold color combinations, lyrical landscapes, and perplexing shifts in scale, is largely responsible for

the classification of Deccani art as a thing of “opulence and fantasy,” as emphasized in the Metropolitan’s tagline. The popular press has seized on this formula of luxury and otherworldliness, concluding, “The sultans [of the Deccan] had a greater interest in culture and leisure than governing.”⁵ Such an observation builds on a long-standing perceived binary between Mughal (1526–1857) and Deccani (c. 1347–1687) art. The conventional contrast is that the former rulers were empire-builders who patronized naturalistic painting informed by European techniques, whereas the latter were diamond-rich tributaries whose escapist tendencies materialized in their fantastical arts.

Although comparison, taxonomy, and connoisseurship are integral to the study of Deccani painting and book arts, important questions remain: What is the concrete evidence for art historical analysis? Have we sourced all available material? Although several notable paintings have come to light since Zebrowski’s canonical 1983 publication, the contextual evidence fostering internal (emic) understanding appears sparse.⁶ Whereas students of Timurid (c. 1370–1507), Safavid (1501–1722), and Mughal painting and book arts benefit from iconic texts such as Ja’far al-Baysunghuri’s *arzadasht* (workshop report), Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulistan-i Hunar* (*Rosegarden of Art*), Sadiqi Beg’s *Qanun al-Suvar* (*Canons of Painting*), Abu’l Fazl’s *A’in-i Akbari* (*Institutes of Akbar*), and Jahangir’s own *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (*Memoirs of Jahangir*), Deccani sources are either limited in their discussion of the arts or have yet to reach the scholarly mainstream due to a lack of critical editions and English translations.⁷ Only a handful of painters and calligraphers are known, and we have little to no sense of workshop practices. Fewer than a dozen illustrated manuscripts have been studied in any significant depth,⁸ and no monographs comparable to those on the *Hamzanamah* (*Tales of Hamzah*) or Ibrahim Mirza’s *Haft Awrang* (*Seven Thrones*) have been published.⁹

The above limitations and the dearth of material acknowledged, some of the most iconic manuscripts of the late medieval and early modern Indo-Persian world—the Timurid *Khamsah* (*Quintet*) of Nizami,¹⁰ the Qur’an manuscript typically associated with Abu Sa’id (r. 1451–1469) (St Andrews), the Shirazi “Peck *Shahnamah*” (*The Book of Kings*),¹¹ and the early Mughal *Khamsah* of Nizami (figure 11.9)—enjoyed vibrant afterlives in Deccani hands and libraries. Such circulation patterns may come as a surprise given the Deccan’s frequent positioning as a peripheral sidebar within the tripartite (Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal) “Gunpowder Empires” narrative, and the Mughal emperors’ luster as the leading bibliophiles on the subcontinent.¹² If and when we nuance the conversation to Indian Ocean worlds and “connected histories,” the Deccan quickly emerges as a key entrepôt within the maritime and overland networks linking a variety of Islamic and European courts and interests.¹³

The contributions and collections of the Mughal emperors notwithstanding, the luxury codices noted above introduce new perspectives and players to the Indo-Persian narrative while their ownership marks function as critical primary source “documents” for the study of Deccani painting and visual culture at large.¹⁴

Whether foreign imports or local products, these collected books shift the art historical narrative from one of original production (Bijapur or Ahmadnagar? Golconda or Shiraz?) to an intraregional (Deccan sultanates, that is, Bahmani, 'Adil Shah, Qutb Shah) and transregional (Deccan, Hindustan, Central Asia, Greater Iran) exploration of circulation, taste, and intellectualism. The peripatetic biographies of the books in question exemplify the Deccan's fluid geopolitical and cultural borders. From the early fifteenth century onward, the region served as a pole of attraction for foreigners (*ghariban*) from western Islamic lands, particularly Iran, and cities such as Shiraz and Bidar were linked by shared patterns of knowledge and religiosity (see Bahmani Dynasty below). In the 1590s, Akbar (r. 1556–1605) initiated Mughal encroachment into the Deccan, and the sultanates in turn strengthened their internal alliances while cultivating brotherhood with Shi'i Safavid Iran. The result of this Mughal-Safavid-Deccani web was the continual flow of talent (calligraphers, poets, painters, scholars) and luxuries (jewels, manuscripts, objects, elephants) between Isfahan, Mashhad, Agra, Bijapur, and Golconda, to name but a few key cities. It was during the seventeenth century that many Deccani owned or produced books entered the Mughal imperial library (see Appendix, no. 5a, figure 11.7B; and no. 12a, figure 11.9B).¹⁵

Like virtually all bibliophile rulers of the day, Deccani sultans were expected to amass sizable collections of books mined from local and foreign sources and considered fundamental to both the princely curriculum and luxury enterprises in the visual arts. With the exception of a portion of Bijapur's Asar Mahal library now preserved in the British Library,¹⁶ codices once populating Deccani repositories are dispersed across the globe, and locating them can be a tedious task rooted in arbitrary luck, such as the rare reproduction of colophons or flyleaves (the opening or closing folios of a volume).¹⁷ The reconstructive exercise is further hindered by a lack of understanding of the Deccani marks of ownership that typically populate such pages, including seal impressions,¹⁸ *ex libris*, and scribal notations written by librarians and other individuals. The largest seal of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) of Bijapur (Appendix, no. 10), for example, has been erroneously associated with other Ibrahims, including Ibrahim I of Bijapur (r. 1535–1558) and the more famous Ibrahim Mirza (d. 1577) of Mashhad.¹⁹ The ownership marks in question illuminate the intellectual prerogatives of many Deccani rulers, while also giving voice to a broader cast of characters—ministers, librarians, poets, ambassadors, Sufi saints—thereby advancing the study of Deccani material culture beyond the “genius” ruler-centric paradigm.

BAHMANI DYNASTY (1347–1548, GULBARGA AND BIDAR)

Although the Bahmani built environment has received considerable scholarly attention since the mid-twentieth century, the dynasty's book culture remains

relatively understudied, especially in comparison to contemporary Timurid and Turkmen traditions.²⁰ This formative period of Deccani history is generally framed around two interrelated narratives: saints and migrants.²¹ Beginning with the premonition of the Chishti saint Nizam al-Din Awliya' (d. 1325) that the general Zafar Khan would one day be king (indeed, he was crowned the first Bahmani sultan: Ala' al-Din Hasan, r. 1347–1358), Sufism had a profound impact on Bahmani kingship. A watershed occurred in 1430, when Ahmad I (r. 1422–1436) moved the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar and switched his affiliation from descendants of the local Chishti saint Sayyid Muhammad Gisu Daraz (d. 1422) to that of the Ni'mat Allahis of southern Iran (Mahan, Taft, Kirman).²² Although Shah Ni'mat Allah Wali (d. 1431) declined Ahmad's request to relocate to the Deccan, his son Khalil Allah (d. c. 1442–1454) and grandsons, including Shah Habib al-Din Muhibb Allah (d. c. 1506) (Appendix, no. 2, figure 11.5), eventually migrated and married into the Bahmani royal family. This influx of Iranian spiritual authority coincided with a broader trend of migration from Iran and Central Asia. Arguably the most famous of these foreigners was the horse merchant turned general and prime minister of Bidar, Mahmud Gavan (d. 1481) (Appendix, no. 1, figure 11.4).²³

Given the historical circumstances outlined above, it is unsurprising that both saints and migrants played a significant role in Bahmani book culture and knowledge systems. The physical migration of Iranians to the Deccan coincided with the intellectual transmission of the Shiraz school of philosophy.²⁴ In some cases, the conduits were leading thinkers of the day. Mir Fazlullah Inju Shirazi (fl. late fourteenth–early fifteenth century), for example, was a student of the Khorasani polymath Sa'd al-Din Taftazani (d. 1389) and subsequently served under both Muhammad II (r. 1378–1397) and Firuz Shah (r. 1397–1422) Bahmani.

Timurid and Turkmen paradigms were also transmitted to the Deccan in the form of books. Although it can be difficult to pinpoint the place of production of some manuscripts (Iran or India? Shiraz or Bidar?), marks of ownership provide concrete evidence of legacy and circulation within the Deccan, often over the course of centuries. A mid-fifteenth-century copy of a commentary on the *Mughni al-Labib* of Ibn Hisham (d. 1360) (Appendix, no. 1a), for example, was impressed with two seals of Mahmud Gavan (no. 1 and a second example dated 876/1471–72), entered the collection of the Shirazi prime minister of Bijapur Shah Navaz Khan (d. c. 1611), and was ultimately presented as a gift (*pishkash*) to Bijapur's royal library (*kitabkhanah-i 'amirah*) in 1617.²⁵ Yet another manuscript once in Mahmud Gavan's collection—a copy of the first half of Burhan al-Din Marghinani's (d. 1196) *Hidaya* (Guidance) dated 9 Shawwal 861/August 30, 1457 (Appendix, no. 1b, figure 11.4)—was likely transcribed in Mamluk Egypt (1250–1517),²⁶ entered Bijapur's library as booty from the conquest of Bidar in 1618,²⁷ and was eventually acquired by Tipu Sultan of Mysore (r. 1782–1799).

‘ADIL SHAHI DYNASTY (1490–1686, BIJAPUR)

Following the rise of the Bahmani successor states at the turn of the sixteenth century, the evidence for Deccani collecting increases. Fittingly, one of the earliest known impressions of an ‘Adil Shahi seal remains an enigma while confirming the dynasty’s ability to acquire luxury codices from its inception. The seal in question appears below the final colophon of an illustrated, two-volume Anthology dated 838–40/1435–36 that has been attributed to both Iran and Bidar (Appendix, no. 6).²⁸ Its orthography and content are complex and distinct, but its prominent central knotting lends comparison to Timurid and Turkmen examples.²⁹ Directly below the seal impression is a large, four-lined notation dated 24 Ramadan 920/November 12, 1514.³⁰ Combined with the epithet *‘Adil Shah* in the seal and notation, this date has prompted an association with the second ruler of Bijapur, Isma‘il (r. 1510–1534).

The seals of subsequent ‘Adil Shahi bibliophiles are anything but codified and redundant. Their legends rarely conform to traditional formulae including the ruler’s name, lineage, titulature, and/or a date, but are instead personal to each sultan and reflective of the dynasty’s vacillation between various forms of Islam.³¹ The Twelver-Shi‘ism espoused by ‘Ali I (r. 1558–1580), for example, is explicit in his two known circular seals (Appendix, nos. 7–8). The smaller example (figure 11.7) includes a visual allusion to *Dhu-l-Fiqar* (the double-bladed sword of ‘Ali, d. 661), whereas the larger one features a circle enclosed by a radiating inscription naming the Twelve Imams, an arrangement paralleling some roughly contemporary examples of Deccani metalwork.³² The formal refinement of both seals hints at the sophistication of ‘Ali’s library bureaucracy, a reality borne out by the contemporary observation that his *kitabkhanah* (lit., library-workshop) “comprised sixty men, calligraphists, gilders of books, book-binders and illuminators.”³³ Conveniently, two administrative documents survive that record the appointment and salary of the head librarian, one Waman Pandit. Impressed with numerous seals, they facilitate the “repopulation” of Ali’s court, including the officer of the wardrobe (*mir push*) and the prime minister (*vakil-i saltanat*).³⁴

Although the full extent of ‘Ali’s library can only be imagined, a handful of his books bear ownership marks that prove their absorption into the library of his nephew and successor Ibrahim II.³⁵ At present, approximately eighty volumes can be linked to Ibrahim directly or to libraries under his reign, rendering his reconstructed collection the largest Deccani example to date, albeit at a fraction of its original size.³⁶ Upon the marriage of his daughter Sultan Begum Sahibah to Prince Daniyal, Ibrahim is recorded to have gifted two thousand books alone to Akbar.³⁷ Regardless of some inevitable exaggeration, the size of Ibrahim’s library seems to have been considerable.

The evidence for the reconstruction of Ibrahim’s library falls into five categories: his seals (two main examples: Appendix, nos. 9–10), ex libris (two examples:

figure 11.5B, figure 11.6B), an elaborate binding stamp based on one of his seals (no. 10), scribal notations penned by his librarians (figure 11.5B, figure 11.7B), and the seals of his chief interlocutors, including the aforementioned prime minister Shah Navaz Khan (Appendix, no. 11).³⁸ This raw data confirms the existence of several repositories during Ibrahim's reign, including the city's royal library (*kitabkhanah-yi 'amirah*), the ruler's wardrobe (*jamadarkhanah*), and a collection personal to Ibrahim that preserved luxurious volumes (*kitabkhanah-yi huzur*).

Ibrahim's two most common seals are radically distinct from one another and from those of his predecessors and contemporaries. The first is a small, oval example inscribed *Ibrahim nawras* (Appendix, no. 9, figure 11.8). The use of the latter term leaves no doubt of the individual in question, for this word was ubiquitous at Ibrahim's court and used to designate everything from buildings (Qasr-i Nawras Bihisht) to cities (Nawraspur) to the ruler's collection of songs (*Kitab-i Nawras*). The second seal is a far larger, circular example bearing a single Qur'anic verse (2:130) that simultaneously honors the ruler's namesake and casts him as a repentant *hanif* on the pure path (*millat-i Ibrahim*) (Appendix, no. 10). This seal was probably developed as part of a larger program to broadcast Ibrahim's repentance (*tawbah*), which had been spearheaded by some of Bijapur's Sufis in reaction to his syncretic Hindu-Muslim spirituality, including devotion to the Hindu goddess Saraswati. Stylistically, the seal is closely related to examples of Deccani metalwork that feature *thuluth* inscriptions in clear registers created by the horizontal extension (*kashidah*) of individual letters, all upon a delicate spiral ground with floral accents.³⁹

The scribal notations in Ibrahim's manuscripts occur in a variety of forms and can be categorized as key "documents" for the study of Bijapuri book arts and courtly culture at large. Some are short monetary valuations or inspection notices (*arzdidah*), but others are lengthy descriptions that record the book's author, scribe, script, binding, impression with a particular seal, provenance (*babat* or *pishkash*), transfer from a different library (typically the *jamadarkhanah*), date of accession into the royal library, ranking (first, second, or third class), and presence in a sub-collection (figure 11.5B, figure 11.7B). Most of the volumes have lost their bindings, whether original or a Bijapuri refurbishment, but glimpses of the latter can be gleaned from vivid scribal notations. The example in Ibrahim's *Yusuf va Zulaykha* transcribed by the renowned Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (d. c. 1564–65), for example, reads, "Newly bound with yellow lining and red binding" (*astar-i zard jild-i surkh naw bastah*).⁴⁰

Only one extant binding—the example sheathing the Qur'an manuscript preserved in the University of St Andrews, which has been associated with the Timurid Abu Sa'id since its inclusion in the 1989 Timur exhibition—can be confidently linked to Ibrahim.⁴¹ Each of the binding's doublures features a large (H: 9.5 cm), diamond-shaped stamp with scalloped edges whose central circle is a nearly exact replica of Ibrahim's Qur'anic seal (Appendix, no. 10).⁴² This intriguing dual purposing of a single epigraphic design—as a seal impressed on paper and a stamp pressure-tooled into leather—remains a confounding unicum.⁴³

Although Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s reign (r. 1627–1656) witnessed the heightened fracturing of the Deccan under Mughal hegemony, luxury foreign volumes continued to enter Bijapuri collections. The renowned 1555 Mughal *Khamseh* (Quintet) of Nizami bears Muhammad’s large circular seal—distinguished by a sunburst design on the perimeter—in the middle of the final page of text (Appendix, no. 12, figure 11.9). Immediately below is a notation in *nasta‘liq* reading *kitab-i Khamsah-i Nizami khass-i humayun-i ashraf-i aqdas-i arfa’ Muhammad ‘Adil Shah Ghazi* (Book of the *Quintet* of Nizami [belonging to] the most royal . . . Muhammad ‘Adil Shah Ghazi). This titulature echoes that of his predecessor Ibrahim, and the notation itself closely resembles Ibrahim-period examples in both content and execution.⁴⁴ Viewed together, these similarities imply considerable continuity between the libraries of father and son, with the latter absorbing both the books and perhaps even the staff of the former. Of additional interest is the fact that this early Mughal *Khamseh* made its way to Bijapur, entered Muhammad’s library, and was then (re)purchased by ‘Alamgir in 1678 for the high price of 3,500 rupees.⁴⁵ It was likely via Mughal intermediaries based in cities like Burhanpur—consider the general-patron-poet ‘Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan (d. 1626–27)⁴⁶—or the many itinerant poets, ambassadors, and artists that traversed the Mughal-Deccan corridor from Akbar’s reign onward that the volume traveled south in the first place.

QUTB SHAHI DYNASTY (1496–1687, GOLCONDA AND HYDERABAD)

Like their ‘Adil Shahi contemporaries, the rulers of Qutb Shahi Golconda and Hyderabad were avid collectors steeped in the Persian literary tradition who enjoyed the resources to acquire universally cherished volumes (their ownership of the 1431–32 Timurid *Khamseh* of Nizami being a case in point).⁴⁷ In comparison to the diversity of ‘Adil Shahi royal seals, Qutb Shahi examples conform to a codified paradigm.⁴⁸ The preferred form, employed for at least four rulers, was probably inspired by Safavid models and comprised of a circle topped by an arched headpiece (Appendix, nos. 16–20, figures 11.12–11.14).⁴⁹ This codification of shape did not transfer to the inscriptions, which vary dramatically in content. Several are dated and appear to correspond to the given ruler’s accession.

Qutb Shahi conventions of indicating ownership—via seal impressions, ex libris, and scribal notations—can be compared variously to Safavid, ‘Adil Shahi, and Mughal paradigms. Like Mughal manuscripts, Qutb Shahi books were often impressed with the seals of multiple rulers in close proximity on a single folio (figure 11.12, figure 11.13).⁵⁰ Sultan Muhammad (r. 1612–1626) was also inclined to inscribe his books in his own hand, a direct intervention recalling those of Jahangir

(r. 1605–1627) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658). Unlike these Mughal notations, however, Sultan Muhammad's inscriptions were generally framed in an illuminated rectangle with a gold floral background, rendering them a veritable *ex libris*. These inscriptions vary in length and detail, and the example in his *Ziyaratnamah* (Book of Visitation) reproduced here is on the shorter end of the spectrum ("Ziyaratnamah, a gift of Malik al-Tujjar, as noted by Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah on the date of the start of the month of Blessed Ramazan, mid-October 1615") (Appendix, no. 19g, figure 11.13).⁵¹ In its combination of illumination and documentary details specific to the codex in question, Sultan Muhammad's autograph *ex libris* can be compared to the illuminated *ex libris* of Ibrahim II of Bijapur (for example, figure 11.6), with a key difference being that the latter was not written by the ruler himself.

A final parallel can be drawn between the Qutb Shah, 'Adil Shah, and Safavid imperative to mark esteemed volumes with multiple impressions of a single seal. The most famous Safavid examples of such repetition occur in manuscripts endowed (*waqf*) to the ancestral shrine at Ardabil.⁵² The best known Qutb Shahi example is the St. Petersburg *Khamsah*, where the seal of Sultan Muhammad dated 1020/1612 appears on each of the five illuminated title pages (Appendix, no. 18a).⁵³ In Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II's *Divan* of Jami, his Qur'anic seal marks all but one of the volume's eighteen illustrated folios (Appendix, no. 10b).⁵⁴

Two final peripatetic manuscripts associated with the Qutb Shahs attest to the court's diplomatic and religious relations with Safavid Iran. The last folio of the Shirazi *Shahnamah* dated 998/1589–90 (so-called Peck *Shahnamah*) contains an inscription by Khayrat Khan (d. 1655), ambassador of 'Abd Allah (r. 1626–1672) to Shah Safi (r. 1629–1642), recording his purchase of the manuscript in Isfahan in Rajab 1040/September 1631 from the daughter of the ruler of Gilan (also the widow of Shah 'Abbas, r. 1587–1629).⁵⁵ The same envoy patronized architectural refurbishments at the Shrine of Imam Riza (d. 818) in Mashhad, and this complex (Astan-i Quds-i Razavi) also preserves a magnificent Qur'an manuscript copied by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, the same Shirazi calligrapher responsible for the Kuwait Qur'an mentioned at the beginning of this essay.⁵⁶ As with the Kuwait example, scholars vacillate on attributing the Mashhad *mushaf* (a Qur'an manuscript) to Iran or India, Shiraz or Golconda. Although the manuscript's production remains ambiguous, its terminus ante quem and afterlife are refreshingly clear, thanks to its double-page *waqfnamah* (endowment deed) dated 970/1562 in the name of Ibrahim Qutb Shah (r. 1550–1580).⁵⁷ Along with its notable peripatetic "mates"—the St. Petersburg *Khamsah*, the St Andrews Qur'an, the Ahmedabad *Khamsah*, the Princeton *Shahnamah*—the Mashhad Qur'an (or truly the Shiraz-Golconda-Mashhad Qur'an) further confirms that the study of Deccani book culture is anything but a peripheral sidebar. Rather, it is an integral component of connected histories between Greater Iran and the subcontinent.

OVERVIEW OF DECCANI SEALS: FORM, FUNCTION, AND LANGUAGE

Deccani seals follow established precedents set by earlier Muslim rulers. The wording of the legends, as well as their shapes, scripts, and formats, frequently follow Timurid and Safavid examples.⁵⁸ Written in Arabic, Persian, or a combination of the two, all of the seals presented here were carved in intaglio matrices, probably of metal or semi-precious stone such as carnelian. Most inscriptions are rendered in stacked *thuluth*, *naskh*, or *nasta'liq*, and a few are ringed around the center. Their exact orthography is ambiguous at times given that the inscriptions were often modified to fit within a restricted surface area. The scripts often veer from accepted standards, and variant letterforms are also frequently seen, including consonants with or without dots, as well as clustered, disconnected, redistributed, or even completely displaced groupings of letters.⁵⁹

The inscriptions do not merely indicate ownership of a manuscript but can also signify both temporal and divine authority through the citation of Qur'anic verses or expressions of traditional Islamic piety. Some are explicit, and others are inferred. Qur'anic scripture on no. 10 and no. 20 (figure 11.13), for example, allude to the namesakes of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) and 'Abd Allah Qutb Shah (r. 1626–1672), respectively. The overtly Shi'i inscriptions on the seals of 'Ali 'Adil Shah I (r. 1558–1580) invoke 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the Prophet Muhammad, and all twelve of the Alid imams (Appendix, nos. 7–8, figure 11.7).⁶⁰ The format of no. 8—a double circle with an exterior radiating inscription—was probably modeled on earlier Safavid seals, including those of Shah Tahmasb (r. 1524–1576).⁶¹ In contrast, a couplet inscribed on the circumference of the seal of an official under 'Ali II (r. 1656–1672) (Appendix, no. 15, figure 11.11) exclusively invokes the Prophet Muhammad. It not only references his role as the “Seal of the Prophets,” the last of all the prophets according to the Islamic faith, but also the hadith (prophetic tradition) that he wore a silver seal ring inscribed “Muhammad is the Prophet of God,” a practice subsequently emulated by pious male Muslims.⁶² In comparison to the Shi'i examples discussed above (nos. 7–8), this seal intentionally asserts an orthodox Sunni identity coinciding with the period of increasing Mughal hegemony in the Deccan.

Another inscription alluding to the earlier prophet Solomon is designed to recall traditions praising him as the wisest of kings, as well as his supernatural abilities. The legend of no. 19 (figure 11.12 and figure 11.13), one of two seals of Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (r. 1612–1626) (also see no. 18), mentions the *muhur-i Sulayman* (seal of Solomon), which, according to Islamic tradition, was engraved with the divine *Ism al-'Azam*, or “Greatest Name” of God. By means of this talisman, Solomon was miraculously able to control nature and subdue the *jinn*. Sultan Muhammad probably borrowed this association from his predecessor Muhammad Quli (r. 1580–1612) (no. 17, figure 11.12), who was declared as his

“Solomonic royal highness” in the title of a luxury manuscript of his poetry completed circa 1590–1605.⁶³

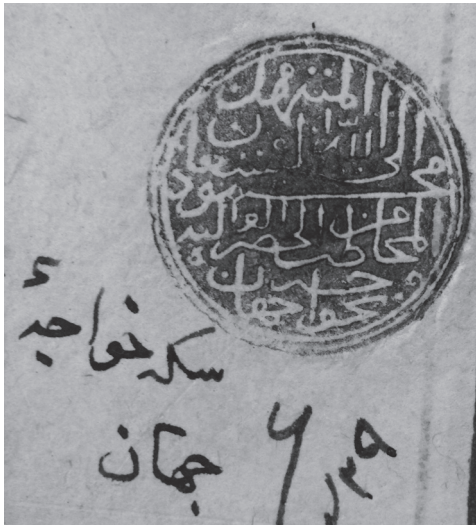
Deccani seal inscriptions also reflect the Persianate literary imagination via the use of rhyming prose or couplets, metaphors, and puns.⁶⁴ No. 16 (figure 11.12) and no. 19 (figure 11.11 and figure 11.13) bear the phrase *naqsh u nigin* (design and sealstone), which refers to both the carved “seal” matrix and the resultant “design” or impression. Many Persian poems and associated illustrations frequently play upon this trope as a metaphor for the emotional impact impressed by the beloved upon the lover.⁶⁵ Similarly, some legends are cleverly polysemic. In no. 15 (figure 11.11), for example, the words *mīhr* (light, grace, or compassion) and *muhr* (seal) share identical unvocalized spelling in Persian, which can be read and interpreted in several different ways.

Several seals bear distinct visual elements beyond their inscriptions. No. 9 (figure 11.8) and no. 10 have purely decorative arabesque scrollwork in the background, whereas no. 2 (figure 11.5), no. 4 (figure 11.6), and no. 6 feature a prominent central plaited knot recalling earlier Timurid and Turkmen exemplars that may have served either a talismanic or purely decorative purpose.⁶⁶ No. 7 (figure 11.7) depicts the legendary sword Dhu-l-Fiqar of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, and no. 12 (figure 11.9) is surrounded by a sunburst emblematic of divine favor and solar kingship. The trefoil-shaped headpieces of Qutb Shahi examples probably conjured multiple referents. When framing a holy name (as in no. 20, figure 11.13), an association with the mihrab (the niche directing prayer toward Mecca) was possible. Alternatively, it could have evoked a ubiquitous form of kingship, the parasol (*chatra* in the Indian context).⁶⁷ Finally, the seal as whole might have symbolized the political alliance of the Qutb Shahs with Safavid Iran, where their Shi‘i brethren employed similarly shaped seals.⁶⁸

One of the more enigmatic seals surveyed here is a hexagonal example bearing a simple Arabic aphorism: “Perpetual diligence; everlasting contentment” (no. 4, figure 11.6). Although no particular person or institution is mentioned, a likely Bahmani-period provenance of the manuscript may indicate an association with the Ni‘mat Allahi Sufi order. Regardless of precise attribution, the sentiment of the aphorism clearly serves to remind the viewer of life’s greater pursuits.

APPENDIX: CATALOG OF DECCANI SEALS AND IMPRESSIONS

The seals presented here are a representative sample and by no means comprehensive. Many more will come to light with time, as will their impressions. Each entry is ordered as follows: name of individual (with brief description); seal details (most measurements are in diameter); description of the inscription’s layout and orthography; transliteration and English translation; some notable impressions, generally favoring unpublished examples; provenance (when known); and bibliography (preference is given to reproductions and most recent publications).⁶⁹



A



B

FIGURES 11.4A–B Seal impression of Mahmud Gavan (d. 1481) of Bidar (no. 1). First half of the *Hidayah* of Burhan al-Din Marghinani, transcribed by ‘Ali b. Hasan al-Azhari.

Source: Loth 211/IO Islamic 605, fol. 6r (appendix, no. 1b)

Date: 9 Shawwal 861/August 30, 1457

Place of origin: Attributed to Egypt

Credit: © British Library Board

Bahmani (1347–1538, Bidar)

1. (figure 11.4) Mahmud Gavan (d. 1481): horse merchant, general, prime minister of Bidar

Circular, 22 mm, double-ruled, Arabic and Persian, *thuluth*

The horizontal extension (*kashidah*)⁷⁰ of the letter *ha* in the name *Mahmud* divides the inscription into upper and lower registers.

bi-Khvajah-i Jahan min al-Mukhatib al-Hazrat al-‘Aliyah Mahmud ilà Allah al-Musta‘an al-Mubtahil

By the Master of the World, the Interlocutor of his most Excellent Praiseworthy (Mahmud) Highness, to God, the Entreated of the Supplicant

Notable impressions:

- a. Commentary by Muhammad b. Abi Bakir al-Damamini (d. 1424) on the *Mughni al-Labib* (a compendium of Arabic grammar) of Ibn Hisham (d. 1360),

- dated 4 Rabi' I 824/March 8, 1421 (London, British Library, Loth 967/B 7). Provenance: Mahmud Gavan (this seal and a second example dated 876/1471–72); Shah Navaz Khan (prime minister of Bijapur under Ibrahim II; seal no. 11); Bijapur royal library (gift from the former's son; accessioned in 1617 during the reign of Ibrahim II). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 268; Overton, "Book Culture," 2016, 115.
- b. (figure 11.4) First half of the *Hidayah* (Guidance) of Burhan al-Din Marghinani (d. 1196), a commentary on his own *Bidayah al-Mubtadi* (Start for the Beginner) on Hanafite law, transcribed by 'Ali b. Hasan al-Azhari, probably in Egypt, dated 9 Shawwal 861/August 30, 1457 (London, British Library, Loth 211/IO Islamic 605). Provenance: Mahmud Gavan; probably the Nim'at Allahi Sufi order of Bidar (fol. 6v bears seal no. 4); Bijapur royal library (accessioned upon the conquest of Bidar in 1618, reign of Ibrahim II); 'Abd al-Majid Khan (seal dated 1145/1732–33); and Tipu Sultan (r. 1782–1799). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 54; Overton, "Book Culture," 2016, 116.
- c. Anthology, including the work of Taftazani, transcribed by Muhammad b. Shihab Siraji, one of Taftazani's pupils (London, British Library, Loth 426/B 203, 234). Provenance: Mahmud Gavan; Bijapur royal library (accessioned upon the conquest of Bidar in 1618, reign of Ibrahim II). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 110.
- d. *Taj al-Masadir* (Crown of Sources) of Abu Ja'far Bayhaqi (Bu Ja'farak; d. 1150), a dictionary of Arabic infinitives (London, British Library, Loth 994/B 38). Provenance: Mahmud Gavan; Bijapur royal library (accessioned upon the conquest of Bidar in 1618, reign of Ibrahim II). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 277.
2. (figure 11.5) Shah Habib al-Din Muhibb Allah (d. c. 1506): son of Shah Khalil Allah (d. c. 1442–1454) and a leading shaykh of the Ni'mat Allahi Sufi family based in Bidar
- Circular, 21 mm, double-ruled, Arabic, *rayhani*
- Three prominent *kashidah* (the *sin* and final *ya* in the name of *al-Husayni*, and the final *ya* in *al-Ghani*) divide the inscription into upper and lower registers.
- Top: *al-Musta'in li-Ghani*, *al-'Inayat al-Mulk*
- Bottom: *Muhibb Allah bin Khalil Allah ibn Ni'mat Allah al-Husayni*
- Entreator of the Prosperous, Custodian of the Kingdom, Muhibb Allah, son of Khalil Allah, son of Ni'mat Allah al-Husayni
- Notable impressions:
- a. (figure 11.5) Commentary by Shams al-Din Mahmud Isfahani (d. 1345) on the *Tawali' al-Anwar* of 'Abdullah b. 'Umar Baydawi (d. 1286), transcribed by Ja'far b. Ja'far al-Riza al-Urayzi al-Husayni, dated 31 Rabi' I 861/February 25,



A



B

FIGURES 11.5A–B Seal impressions of Shah Habib al-Din Muhibb Allah (d. c. 1506) (circular, second from top; no. 2) and his son Wali Allah (octagonal, third from top; no. 3) of Bidar. Also visible is the incomplete illuminated ex libris of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) of Bijapur and scribal notations dating to his reign. Commentary by Shams al-Din Mahmud Isfahani on the *Tawali’ al-Anwar* of Baydawi, transcribed by Ja‘far b. Ja‘far al-Riza al-Urayzi al-Husayni.

Source: British Library, Loth 428/B 223A, fol. 3r (appendix, no. 2a)

Date: 31 Rabi‘ I 861/February 25, 1457

Credit: © British Library Board

1457 (London, British Library, Loth 428/B 223A, fol. 3r). Provenance: Shah Habib al-Din Muhibb Allah; the former’s son Wali Allah; Shah Abu’l Hasan Qadiri (leading Sufi shaykh of Bijapur, d. 1635)⁷¹; Bijapur royal library (accessioned on 4 Rajab 1003/March 15, 1595, reign of Ibrahim II). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 111; Overton, “Book Culture,” 2016, 116.

3. (figure 11.5) Wali Allah: apparently a son of Shah Habib al-Din Muhibb Allah (d. c. 1506) (no. 2)

Octagonal, 25 mm, double-ruled, Arabic, *thuluth*

A prominent, plaited knot in the center of the inscription connects to the outer rulings and creates distinct upper and lower registers that are read from top to bottom.

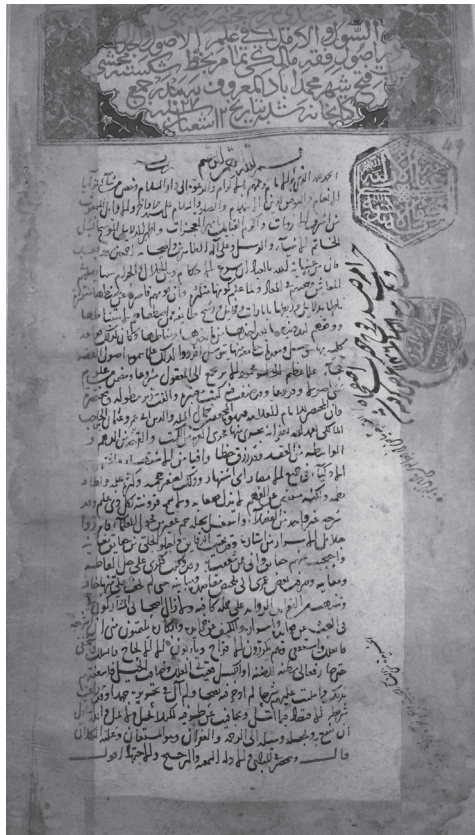
Top: *al-Malik al-Qawi al-Ghani al-Musta'in bi-Nasr Allah*

Bottom: *Wali Allah ibn Muhibb Allah ibn Khalil Allah al-Husayni*

The powerful and prosperous King, seeking the aid of God, Wali Allah son of Muhibb Allah son of Khalil Allah al-Husayni



A



B

FIGURES 11.6A–B Unknown seal impression, probably affiliated with the Ni'mat Allahi order of fifteenth-century Bidar (no. 4). Visible above is the illuminated ex libris of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) of Bijapur. Commentary by 'Adud al-Din Iji on his *Mukhtasar al-Muntaha*.

Source: British Library, Loth 428/B 223A, fol. 1v (appendix, no. 4b)

Credit: © British Library Board

Notable impressions:

- a. (figure 11.5) Commentary by Isfahani on the *Tawali' al-Anwar* of Baydawi: no. 2a
4. (figure 11.6) Individual unknown: probably affiliated with the Ni'mat Allahi Sufi order of Bidar
 Hexagonal, 26 mm, double-ruled, Arabic, *muhaqqaq*
 A prominent, plaited knot in the center of the inscription connects to the outer rulings and creates distinct upper and lower registers that could be read from top to bottom, or vice versa.
Kifayat al-Abadiyah; 'Inayat al-Azaliyah
 Perpetual diligence; everlasting contentment
 Notable impressions:
 - a. *Hidayah* of Marghinani: no. 1b (figure 11.4). This impression is on fol. 6v.
 - b. (figure 11.6) Commentary by 'Adud al-Din Iji (d. 1355–56) on his *Mukhtasar al-Muntaha* (London, British Library, Loth 299/B 323, fol. 1v). Provenance: Ni'mat Allahi Sufi order of Bidar?; Bijapur royal library (accessioned on 12 Sha'ban 1027/August 4, 1618, upon the conquest of Bidar, reign of Ibrahim II). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 74.

5. (figure 11.7) Sadr Jahan: one Sadr Jahan initially served as tutor to Muhammad Shah III (r. 1463–1482) and was later appointed Chief Magistrate.⁷² A missive of Mahmud Gavan addressed to this figure survives.⁷³

Circular, 22 mm, double-ruled, Arabic, *naskh*

Reading of the stacked inscription begins under the *kashidah* of the letter *mim* in *Malik*, continues upward, and concludes on the bottom.

*Qazi al-Quzzat Malik al-'Ulama' al-Musta'in ilà Allah al-Manan, Sadr Jahan ibn Jalal al-Din Muhammad Jahan ['Abd?] Allah(?)*⁷⁴

Judge of judges, King of religious scholars, Supplicant to God the Beneficent, Sadr Jahan, son of Jalal al-Din Muhammad Jahan(?) 'Abd Allah(?).

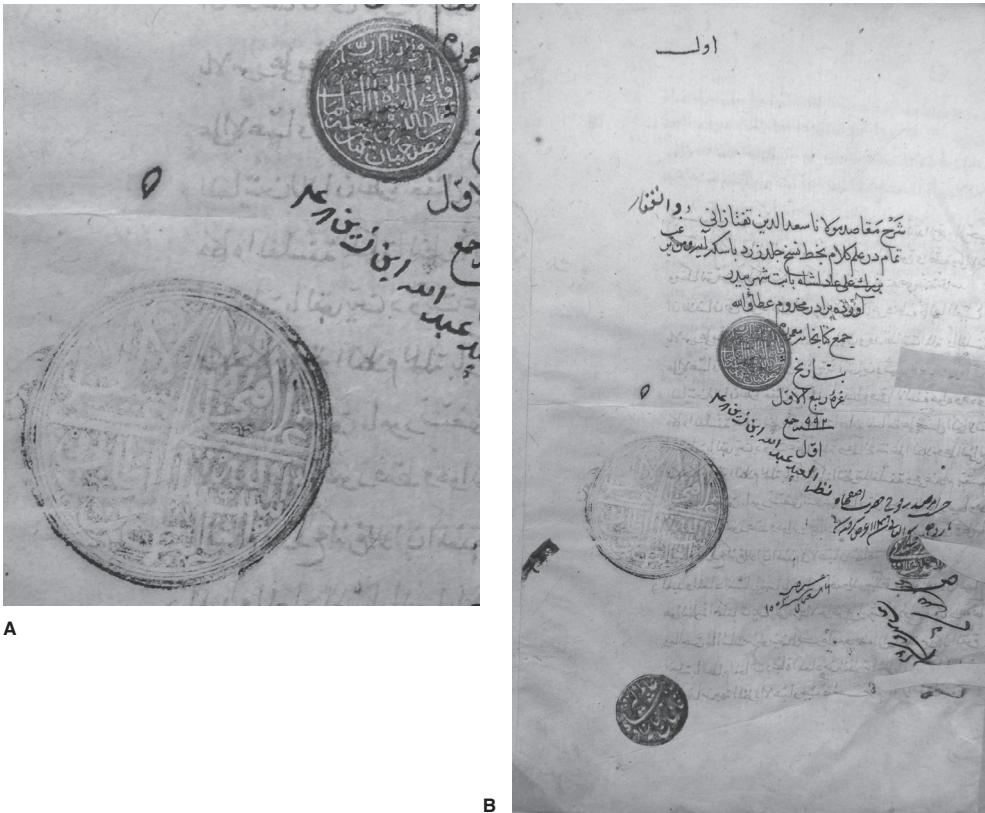
Notable impressions:

- a. (figure 11.7) *Sharh al-Maqasid* of Sa'd al-Din Mas'ud b. 'Umar al-Taftazani (d. 1390) (London, British Library, Loth 463/B 185, fol. 3r). Provenance: Sadr Jahan; brought from Bidar by 'Ata Allah; 'Ali 'Adil Shah I (seal no. 7); Bijapur royal library (accessioned on 1 Rabi' I 992/March 13, 1584, reign of Ibrahim II; 'arzdidah dated 6 Sha'ban 1003/April 16, 1595); Mughal library (probably the seal of Qabil Khan inscribed *khanazada-yi 'Alamgir Padshah*, dated 1097/1685–86⁷⁵; oval seal of Muhammad Akram al-Madani inscribed *al-'Abd Muhammad Akram al-Madani*, dated 1136/1723–24). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 119.

'Adil Shah (1490–1686, Bijapur)

6. Isma'il 'Adil Shah (r. 1510–1534), or a high official in his court

Circular, 28 mm, triple-ruled, Persian, *naskh*



FIGURES 11.7A–B Seal impressions of Sadr Jahan of late-fifteenth-century Bidar (*top*; no. 5) and 'Ali 'Adil Shah I (r. 1558–1580) of Bijapur (*middle*; no. 7). Also visible are scribal notations (*inverted triangle*) dating to the reign of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) of Bijapur. *Sharh al-Maqasid* of Taftazani.

Source: British Library, Loth 463/B 185, fol. 3r (appendix, no. 5a)

Credit: © British Library Board

The *kashidah* of the letter *sin* in *asaman*, which divides the inscription into upper and lower registers, is embellished with a central, quadripartite knot. Reading begins at the top and then proceeds to the bottom.

Ta charkh-i asaman pur az nigin-i mah khatim bad

Sikka-yi badshah-i humayun-bakht Shah-i 'Adil bad

So long as the Wheel of Heaven (fate) shall be sealed with the seal-stone of the moon

May the royal fortune of the just king (*Shah-i 'Adil*) be like the Emperor's seal⁷⁶

Notable impressions:

- a. Anthology, in two volumes, possibly Bidar, dated 838–40/1435–36, multiple scribes (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. Per 124 II, fol. 294v). Directly below the impression is a large four-lined notation dated 24 Ramazan 920/

November 12, 1514 that mentions the “Sultan ‘Adil Shah.” This date corresponds to the reign of Isma‘il ‘Adil Shah, which led E. Blochet and M. Minovi to attribute the seal to this ruler (his name is not explicitly mentioned). Bibliography: Arberry, Minovi, and Blochet, *The Chester Beatty Library*, 1959, no. 124; Barbara Brend, *Perspectives on Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amir Khusrau’s Khamsah* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 79; Keelan Overton, “A Collector and His Portrait: Book Arts and Painting for Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II of Bijapur (r. 1580–1627)” (PhD diss., University of California, 2011), fig. 24; Islamic Seals Database, Chester Beatty Library, <http://www.cbl.ie/islamicseals/View-Seals/346.aspx>.

7. (figure 11.7) ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah I (r. 1558–79)

Circular, 40 mm, quadruple-ruled, Arabic, *thuluth*

The inscription is a popular motto referencing ‘Ali and his legendary double-bladed sword *Dhu-l-Fiqar*. It is stacked and set within quadrants divided vertically by the sword and horizontally by the *kashidah* in the twice-repeated name of ‘Ali. Unusually, the sword is not named explicitly at the end but is depicted prominently. The association with ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah is inferred by allusion to his namesake.

Top: *La fata ila ‘Ali; la sayf ila [Dhu-l-Fiqar]*

Bottom: *al-Ghalib Asad Allah ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib*

Top: There is no brave youth other than ‘Ali and there is no sword other than [*Dhu-l-Fiqar*]

Bottom: The Conquering Lion of God, ‘Ali, son of the father of Talib

Notable impressions:

a. (figure 11.7) *Sharh al-Maqasid* of Taftazani: no. 5a.⁷⁷

8. ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah I (r. 1558–1580)

Circular, 36 mm, triple-ruled, Arabic, *thuluth*

The inscription is comprised of two circles: the inner one is stacked, read from bottom to top, and divided by two prominent *kashidah* of the ‘*ayn* and *ya* in the name of ‘Ali. The outer circle includes two registers: the inner one repeats the phrase *wa-l-Imam*, and the outer one names the Prophet Muhammad and the twelve Alid Imams.

Outer: *Allahuma salli ‘ala Mustafa Muhammad wa-l-Imam al-Murtada wa-l-Imam al-Mujtaba wa-l-Imam al-Shahid Husayn wa-l-Imam ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Adibin wa-l-Imam Muhammad Baqir wa-l-Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq wa-l-Imam Musa al-Kazim wa-l-Imam ‘Ali Rida wa-l-Imam Muhammad Taqi wa-l-Imam ‘Ali Naqi wa-l-Imam Hasan al-‘Askari wa-l-Imam Mahdi.*

Inner: ‘*Abduhum Shah ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah, khadim-i ‘atra Rasul Allah.*

Outer: God bless Mustafa Muhammad; and the Imam al-Murtada [‘Ali]; and the Imam al-Mujtaba [Hasan]; and the Martyred Imam Husayn; and the Imam ‘Ali

Zayn al-'Adibin; and the Imam Muhammad; and the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq; and the Imam Musa al-Kazim; and the Imam 'Ali Rida; and the Imam Muhammad Taqi; and the Imam 'Ali Naqi; and the Imam Hasan al-'Askari; and the Imam Mahdi.

Inner: Their servant 'Ali 'Adil Shah, custodian of the progeny of the Prophet.

Notable impressions:

- a. *Khamsah* of Amir Khusraw Dihlavi, Yazd (?), c. 1430, illustrated (Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MS. 302). Provenance: 'Ali I; Ibrahim II (seal no. 10); Mughal library (purchased in Aurangabad on 1 Rabi' I 1107/10 October 1695, reign of 'Alamgir [r. 1658–1707]; seal of Muhammad Shah [r. 1719–48] dated 1156/1743). Bibliography: Black and Saidi, *Islamic Manuscripts*, no. 27; Overton, "Book Culture," 2016, fig. 16.

9. (figure 11.8) Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627)

Oval, 13.5 × 20 mm, double-ruled, *riq'a*

The background is accented with a delicate spiral, small leaves, and floral blossoms.

Ibrahim nawras (or *nawras-i Ibrahim*)



FIGURE 11.8 Left: impression of a circular seal possibly belonging to 'Ali 'Adil Shah I of Bijapur (r. 1558–1580). Right: impression of the *nawras* seal of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II of Bijapur (r. 1580–1627) (no. 9).

Source: Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, 76.851, MS. 1

Date: c. 1570

Place of origin: Shiraz, Iran

Credit: Photograph courtesy of the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad

Based on the reading of the initial syllable as *naw* (new) or *nuh* (nine), as well as the presence or absence of an *izafet*, several translations and interpretations are possible: “Ibrahim nine moods/Nine moods of Ibrahim” (based on the *rasas* of Indian aesthetic theory); “Ibrahim nine juices/Nine juices of Ibrahim” (alluding to a wine recipe combining nine flavors); “Ibrahim newly arrived/New arrival of Ibrahim” (from the Persian “new,” *naw*, and “to arrive,” *rasidan*). The latter is generally used to reference a fresh garden or something innovative. Given the seal’s circulation as early as 1584 (the regency period, when Ibrahim was just fifteen), it could memorialize his accession (“Ibrahim newly arrived,” into kingship) or maturity (“Ibrahim freshly sprouted,” as a *nawjavan*).⁷⁸

Notable impressions:⁷⁹

- a. (figure 11.8) Qur’an manuscript, Shiraz, late sixteenth century (Hyderabad, Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, 76.851, MS.1). Provenance: the single-ruled, circular seal (40 mm) to the left of Ibrahim’s *nawras* example may indicate ownership by his predecessor ‘Ali I (r. 1558–1580).⁸⁰ It bears an Arabic Shi’i slogan in *nasta’liq*—‘*Ali sirat-i Haqq numsiykuhu*’ (‘Ali is the path of Truth to which we cling)—formed by a combination of fourteen detached letters (*huruf muqatta’at*) found at the start of various Qur’anic suras. This legend invokes the namesake of ‘Ali I, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), and could suggest the *mushaf*’s transfer from ‘Ali I to Ibrahim II. It was certainly in the latter’s possession by 14 Safar 1003/October 28, 1594, as recorded in a typical Ibrahim-period inspection notice on the same folio. Bibliography: Overton, “Book Culture,” 2016, fig. 6.

10. Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627)

Circular, 41mm, double-ruled, Arabic, *thuluth*

The background features an even spiral with small leaves and blossoms. The *kashidah* in the words *millat*, *fi*, and *istafaynahu* divide the inscription into four horizontal registers that are read from top to bottom. The Qur’anic verse (2:130) alludes to the Bijapuri ruler by way of his namesake, the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). The selection of this verse, which was highlighted in other artistic contexts, must be contextualized in light of Ibrahim’s repentance (*tawbah*).⁸¹ Through it, the ruler was presented as a repentant *hanif*, an appellation applied to those who considered themselves to have “reverted” to the religion of Ibrahim/Abraham, before and during the prophethood of Muhammad.

wa man yarghabu ‘an millat-i Ibrahim illa man safiha nafsuhu wa laqad istafaynahu fi al-dunya wa innahu fi’l-akhirati lamin al-salihin

Who therefore shrinks from the religion of Abraham, except he be foolish-minded? Indeed, We chose him in the present world, and in the world to come he shall be among the righteous⁸²

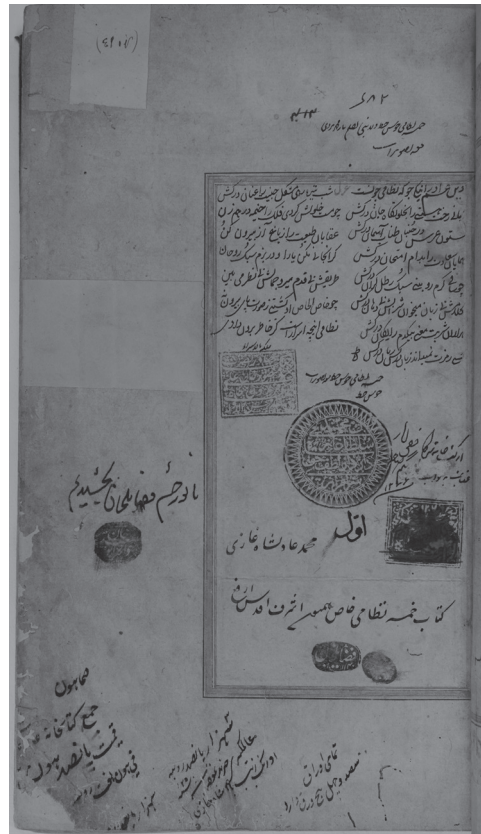
Notable impressions:⁸³

- a. *Khamsah* of Amir Khusraw: no. 8a. Here, the seal impression is integrated into the ruler’s tripartite ex libris. Provenance: ‘Ali I ‘Adil Shah (seal no. 8). Bibliography: Overton, “Book Culture,” 2016, fig. 16.

- b. *Divan* of Jami, transcribed by Shah Muhammad al-Katib al-Shirazi, probably Shiraz, dated 971–2/1563–65, illustrated (Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, Ms. 260). The seal is impressed on all but one of the manuscript's eighteen illustrated folios. It also once adorned the opening flyleaf (fol. 1r), with a notation below, but both have been vigorously effaced. Bibliography: Overton, "Book Culture," 2016, fig. 19; Overton, "From an Enigmatic Binding Stamp," fig. 3.
- c. Opening leaf from a heavily repaired album assembled from at least three different earlier Deccani volumes containing specimens of calligraphy and painting with vividly marbled borders (Delhi, National Museum, MS 55.45, p. 61, fol. 31r). The impression appears beneath the *basmala*, and the word *nawras* is written in a thin peach-colored border.⁸⁴ Bibliography: Overton, "Book Culture," 2016, appendix no. 18; Benson, forthcoming.
11. Shah Navaz Khan (Sa'd al-Din 'Inayat Allah Shirazi; d. c. 1611): prime minister of Bijapur during the reign of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627)
- Circular, 23 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *thuluth*
- The *kashidah* in the words *shah* and *shud* divide this stacked inscription into three registers. Reading begins in the center, followed by the top, then upward from the bottom.
- Falak-i janabam az dawlat-i shah khatabam shud; Shah Navaz Khan*
- The firmament of my majesty was by my decree of the imperial kingdom;
Shah Navaz Khan
- Notable impressions:
- Glosses by Sayyid Sharif Jurjani (d. 1413) on the commentary of Qutb al-Din al-Tahtani al-Razi (d. 1364) on the *Matali' al-Anwar* (Ascendancy of Lights) of Siraj al-Din 'Urmawi (d. 1283), transcribed by Nasr Allah Muhammad b. Ahmad, dated 3 Rabi' II 984/June 30, 1576 (London, British Library, Loth 526 /B 181A⁸⁵, fol. 1r). Provenance: Shah Navaz Khan; Bijapur royal library (gift from the former's son; accessioned on 14 Ramadan 1026/September 15, 1617, during the reign of Ibrahim II). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 144; Overton, "Book Culture," 2016, 113–14.
12. (figure 11.9) Muhammad 'Adil Shah (r. 1627–1656)
- Circular, 44 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *thuluth*
- The perimeter features a sunburst pattern set off from the internal circle by double rulings. Delicate tendrils of flora and foliage embellish the background of the central circle. The *kashidah* of the letter *shin* in *Shah* and the final *ya* in *Sarafrazi* and *Ghazi* divide the inscription into four clear registers that are read from bottom to top.⁸⁶
- Darad az lutf-i Haqq sar-afrazi, Sultan Muhammad Shah ghazi*
- By the grace of God (lit., truth), he is exalted, Sultan Muhammad Shah the Conqueror



A



B

FIGURES 11.9A–B Final page of text with the seal impression of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (r. 1627–1656) of Bijapur (no. 12). Below is a contemporary Bijapuri librarian’s two-lined notation in *nasta’liq*. *Khamsa* of Nizami, transcribed by Yar Muhammad Harawi.

Source: Appendix, no. 12a

Date: c. 1555

Place of origin: Attributed to India

Credit: Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum, Ahmedabad. Photograph courtesy of the museum

Notable impressions:

- a. (figure 11.9) *Khamsah* of Nizami, transcribed by Yar Muhammad Harawi, Hindustan, c. 1555, illustrated (Ahmedabad, Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum). Provenance: Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (below this seal impression is a contemporary two-lined notation in *nasta’liq* recording the ruler’s titlature); Mughal library (purchased in regnal year 20 [1678] of ‘Alamgir’s reign [r. 1658–1707]; seal of Faza’il Khan dated 1140/1727–28⁸⁷); many other impressions require reading. Bibliography: Seyller, “Inspection and Valuation,” 1997, 311; Kumar, “Deccan as Dominion in Nineteenth-Century Photographs,” 2015.
- b. *Sharh al-Wiqayah* (Commentary of Precaution) of ‘Ubayd Allah b. Mas‘ud (d. 1344–47), a legal commentary on the *Burhan al-Shari‘ah* (Proof of Sacred Law) of his grandfather Taj al-Shari‘a b. Sadr al-Shari‘a, Burhanpur, dated

- 17 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1029/October 14, 1620 (London, British Library, Loth 232/B 350, fol. 3r). Provenance: Qazi Khush-hal (seal no. 13); Muhammad 'Adil Shah (below this seal impression is a notation recording accession into the royal library in Ramadan 1054/November 1644, from Khush-hal); Mughal library (seal of Qabil Khan inscribed *khanazada-yi 'Alamgir Padshah*, dated 1097/1685–86; oval seal of Muhammad Akram al-Madani inscribed *al-'Abd Muhammad Akram al-Madani*, dated 1136/1723–24). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 58.
- c. *Tabsir al-Rahman wa Taysir al-Manan* (Enlightener of the Merciful and Aid to the Beneficent), a Qur'anic commentary spuriously ascribed to Zayn al-Din 'Ali 'Umawi Hanbali (d. 1310–11) but likely the work of 'Ala' al-Din 'Ali b. Ahmad al-Maha'imi (d. 1432), multiple scribes, sixteenth century (London, British Library, Loth 97/B 299, fol. 1r.). Provenance: Ibrahim b. Da'ud al-Wassali (see his seal dated 981/1573–74 on fol. 69ov); Qazi Khush-hal (a very faint impression of his seal no. 13 appears to the lower left of Muhammad's); Muhammad 'Adil Shah (below this seal impression is a notation in *nasta'liq* recording the ruler's titulature and accession into the royal library); Mughal library (oval seal of Muhammad Akram al-Madani inscribed *al-'Abd Muhammad Akram al-Madani*, dated 1136/1723–24); three other seals are on the folio in question. Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 20–21.
- d. *Ni'matnamah-i Nasirshahi* (Nasir Shah's Book of Delights), an early illustrated Urdu treatise containing gastronomic, medicinal, and olfactory recipes. Initially written for Sultan Ghiyas al-Din Khalji (r. 1469–1500) and completed during the reign of his son Nasir al-Din Shah (r. 1500–1510) (London, British Library, IO Islamic 149, fol. 1r). Provenance: Sultan Ghiyas al-Din Khalji (r. 1469–1500); Nasir al-Din Shah (r. 1500–1510); unidentified library inspection notation dated 24 Sha'ban 978/January 21, 1571 (see fol. 196v); Muhammad 'Adil Shah (below this seal impression is a notation in *naskh* recording accession into the royal library on 22 Rabi' I 1044/September 15, 1634, from Malik Almas, along with a similar inscription dated eight days later on the flyleaf); and Tipu Sultan (r. 1782–1799). Bibliography: Ursula Sims-Williams, "Nasir Shah's Book of Delights," Asian and African studies (blog), British Library, November 21, 2016, <http://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2016/11/nasir-shahs-book-of-delights.html>.⁸⁸
13. Qazi Khush-hal (d. 1620–21): judge and bibliophile during the reigns of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) and Muhammad 'Adil Shah (r. 1627–1656)
- Oval, 16 × 14 mm, single-ruled, Persian, *nasta'liq*
- The background features a well-proportioned spiral tendril radiating from the center and accented with small leaves and floral blossoms. The date of 1018/1609–10 is prominently rendered on the lower edge.
- Khush-hal* 1018
- Khush-hal* literally means "happy" in Persian.

Notable impressions:

- a. *Sharh al-Wiqayah* of 'Ubayd Allah b. Mas'ud: no. 12b
- b. *Tabsir al-Rahman wa Taysir al-Manan*: no. 12c

14. (figure 11.10)

Muhammad Ikhlas Khan (d. 1656): prime minister during the reign of Muhammad 'Adil Shah (r. 1627–1656)

Dodecahedral, 21 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *nasta'liq*

This seal is comprised of an inscription in two parts. It begins in the surrounding outer ring and concludes with the stacked inscription read from bottom to top in the central circle.

Exterior: *Az Lutf-i Haqq Muhammad Khattab Ikhlas Khan . . .*

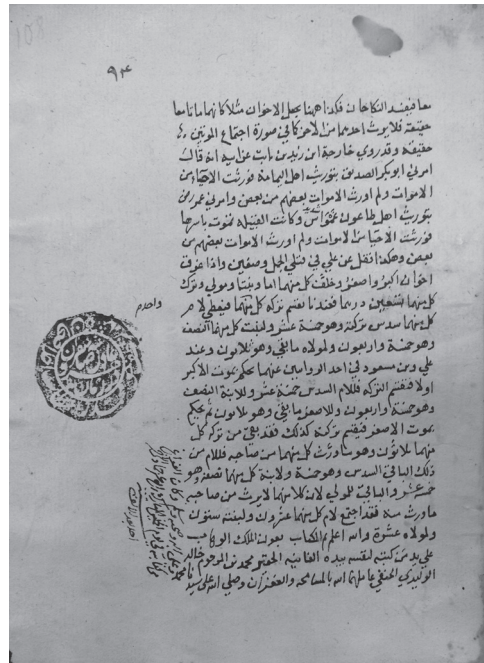
Interior: . . . *Dar zaman-i harv-i 'Adil Shah Sahib-qiran*

Exterior: From the Grace of Truth, Muhammad Khattab Ikhlas Khan . . .

Interior: . . . at the time of the Hero of 'Adil Shah, Lord of the Conjunction.



A



B

FIGURES 11.10A–B Seal impression of Muhammad Ikhlas Khan (d. 1656) of Bijapur (no. 14).

Al-Fara'id (al-Sirajiyah) of Siraj al-Din Sajavandi, with a commentary by Jurjani, transcribed by Muhammad b. Khalid Walidi Hanafi.

Source: British Library, Loth 239/B 56, fol. 108r (appendix, no. 14a)

Date: Sha'ban 995/July–August 1587 and 14 Jumada II 1001/March 18, 1593

Credit: © British Library Board

Notable impressions:

- a. (figure 11.10) *al-Fara'id* of Siraj al-Din Sajavandi (fl. c. 1203–04), a work on inheritance law popularly called *al-Sirajiya* (in the author's honor), accompanied by a commentary on the same by Sayyid Sharif Jurjani (d. 1413), transcribed by Muhammad b. Khalid Walidi Hanafi, dated Sha'ban 995/ July–August 1587 and 14 Jumada II 1001/ March 18, 1593 (London British Library, Loth 239/B 56, fol. 108r). Provenance: Muhammad Ikhlas Khan; library of the Qadiri Sufi order of Bijapur (see the notation on fol. 1r dated 27 Rajab 1075/ February 13, 1665, and recording accession into the “Qadiri library” from one Taj Muhammad); Mughal library (seal of Qabil Khan inscribed *khanazada-yi 'Alamgir Padshah*, unclear if dated; oval seal of Muhammad Akram al-Madani inscribed *al-'Abd Muhammad Akram al-Madani*, dated 1136/1723–24; see 12b). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 60.
15. (figure 11.11)

Muhammad: a servant of Shah 'Ali, likely in reference to Ali II (r. 1656–1672)

Circular, 21 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *riq'a*

This seal features a central *turunj va sar-turunj* (a lobed lozenge with attached tri-lobed finials) with a stacked inscription read from top to bottom containing the owner's name. The outer rim includes a radiating Persian couplet, and the two distiches are divided by the two finials.

Interior: *Muhammad 'Abd-i Shah 'Ali*

Exterior: *Mihr Nabi muhur-i nigin-i dilam*

Hal shudah az mihr-i Nabi mushkilam

Interior: Muhammad, the servant of Shah 'Ali

Exterior: The light of the Prophet is the seal of the signet of my heart

The light of the Prophet solved my problem

Notable impressions:

- a. (figure 11.11) Notes by Sayyid 'Ali 'Ajami (d. 1456) on the glosses by Sayyid Sharif Jurjani (d. 1413) on the commentary of Qutb al-Din al-Tahtani al-Razi (d. 1364) on the *Matali' al-Anwar* of Siraj al-Din 'Urmawi (d. 1283), transcribed by Fakhr al-Din 'Ali b. Darwish Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah (London, British Library Loth 528/B 210, fol. 1r). Provenance: Shah Navaz Khan (prime minister of Bijapur under Ibrahim II; Bijapur royal library (gift of the former's son; accessioned on 29 Shawwal 1026/October 29, 1617, during the reign of Ibrahim II); Muhammad, a servant of Shah 'Ali (likely in reference to 'Ali II); Mughal library (seal of Qabil Khan inscribed *khanazada-yi 'Alamgir Padshah*, dated 1097/1685–86; oval seal of Muhammad Akram al-Madani inscribed *al-'Abd Muhammad Akram al-Madani*, dated 1136/1723–24). Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 145; Overton, “Book Culture,” 2016, 115.



FIGURE 11.11 Seal impression of Muhammad, a servant of Shah 'Ali, probably in reference to Ali 'Adil Shah II (r. 1656–1672) of Bijapur (no. 15). Notes by Sayyid 'Ali 'Ajami on the glosses by Jurjani on the commentary of Qutb al-Din on 'Urmawi's *Matali' al-Anwar*.

Source: British Library, Loth 528/IO Bijapur 210, fol. 1r (appendix, no. 15a)

Credit: © British Library Board

Qutb Shah (1496–1687, Golconda and Hyderabad)

For more on Qutb Shahi seals, see the notes.⁸⁹

16. (figure 11.12)

Ibrahim Qutb Shah (r. 1550–80)

Circular with a triple-lobed arched headpiece, 38 × 29 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *nasta'liq*

The inscription is read from bottom to top. The word *sakht* is divided. The first two letters (*sin-alif*) appear at the top of the finial, and the last two (*kha-ta*) are in the middle with the latter elongated as a *kashidah*.

Shahi kih naqsh-i nigin sakht mihr Al-i Muqim

*Bud sipihir-i karam-i Qutb Shah-i Ibrahim*⁹⁰

A king who made the seal of the signet of light the Enduring House⁹¹

Was the heaven of honor of Ibrahim Qutb Shah

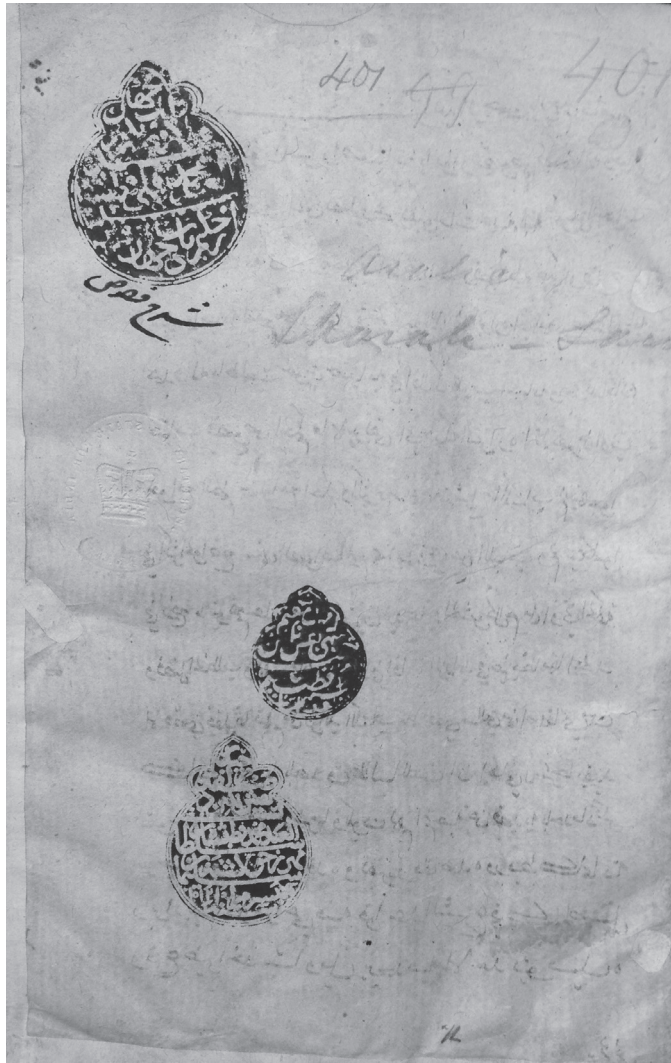


FIGURE 11.12 Seal impressions of Ibrahim Qutb Shah (r. 1550–1580) (middle; no. 16); Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (r. 1580–1612) (top; no. 17); and Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (r. 1612–1627) (bottom, no. 19) of Golconda. *Khusus al-Ni'am fi Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* of Ibn 'Arabi. Source: British Library, Loth 650/IO Bijapur 401, fol. 1r (appendix, no. 16a)
Credit: © British Library Board

Notable impressions:

- a. (figure 11.12) *Khusus al-Ni'am fi Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* (Matters of Refinement, upon a commentary of the Bezels of Wisdom) of Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), multiple scribes (London, British Library, Loth 650/B 401, fol. 1r). Provenance: Ibrahim Qutb Shah; Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah; Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah. The seals of all three rulers appear on the folio in question. Bibliography: Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 1877, 176.

- b. Persian translation of the *Anwar al-'Uqul min Ash'ar Wasi al-Rasul* (Lights of the Intellect from the Poems of the Custodians of the Prophet) of Muhammad Bayhaqi, dated 25 Safar 918/May 12, 1512 (Hyderabad, Salar Jung Museum, MS. 2564/H.I. 47, M. Nos. 208). Provenance: Ibrahim Qutb Shah; Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah; Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (the seals of all three rulers appear on the folio in question); Mughal library (valuation dated 1086/1675–76). Bibliography: Ashraf, *A Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 7, 1980, no. 2564 and illustration facing page 105; Seyller, “Inspection and Valuation,” 1997, 324⁹²; Aq'qal'ah, “Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah,” 2015, fig. 1.
- c. *Arba'a* of Hatifi (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library Persian, Ms. 261). Provenance: Ibrahim Qutb Shah; Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah; Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah. Bibliography: Arberry, Minovi, and Blochet, *The Chester Beatty Library*, 1959, 3:35–36; Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” 2011, 80–81.
17. (figure 11.12 and figure 11.13) Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (r. 1580–1612)
Circular with a triple-lobed arched headpiece, 44 × 36 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *thuluth*
This inscription is divided horizontally twice by the *kashidah* of the word *shuda*, forming three registers. Reading begins at the top, jumps to the bottom, and concludes in the middle.
Mulk-i Jahan mara bizir-i nigin shuda
Az hukm-i Bad Shah-i Jahan afarin shuda
*al-'Abd Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah*⁹³
The kingdom of the world has come under the seal
That was created by the rule of the Emperor
The servant Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah
Notable extant impressions:
- a. (figure 11.12) *Khusus al-Ni'am* of Ibn 'Arabi: no. 16a
b. Persian translation of the *Anwar al-'Uqul* of Bayhaqi: no. 16b
c. *Arba'a* of Hatifi: no. 16c
d. *Yusuf va Zulaykha* of 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492), copied by Muhammad Qivam al-Shirazi, Shiraz, c. 1550–1560, illustrated (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 13.228.8.1, opening flyleaf). This is the only seal impression on the folio (a large notation is in the upper left). Provenance: Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (a notation on the second flyleaf records that it was “brought by Der-vish Beg” and accessioned into the “Dad Mahal” library on 7 Ramazan 1017/December 15, 1608); Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (seal no. 19); seal of Zayn al-'Abidin dated 1190/1776. Bibliography: Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” 2011, 48n87; Simpson and Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings*, 2015, 46n102; and Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446544?sortBy=Relevance&ft=13.228.8&pg=1&rpp=20&pos=5> (find the flyleaf under “Additional Images”).

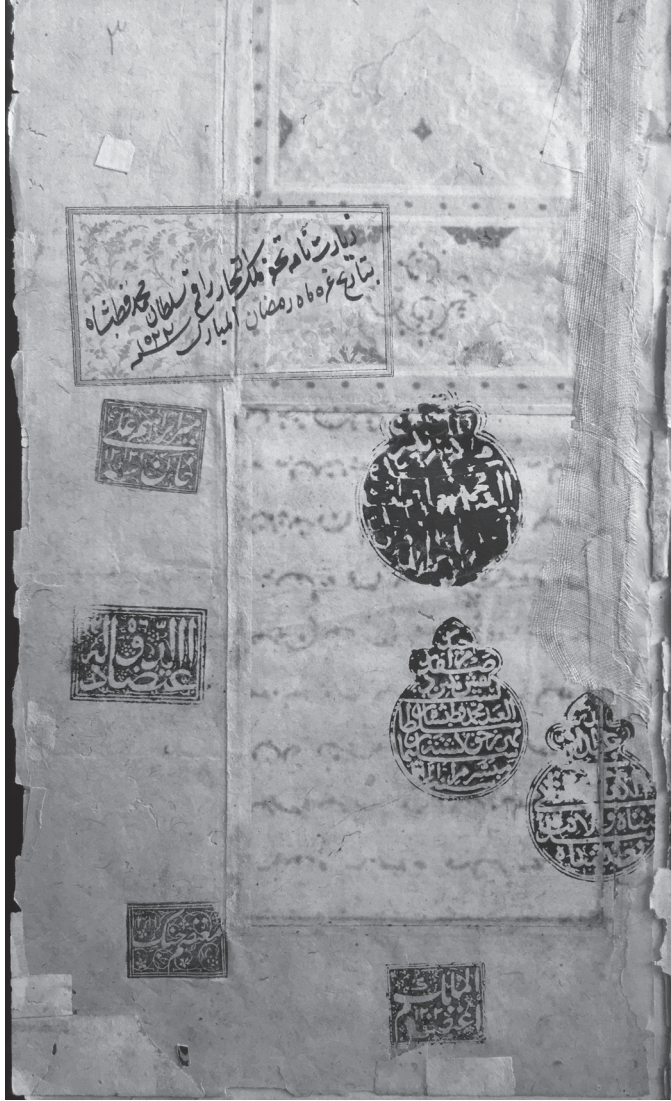


FIGURE 11.13 Seal impressions of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (r. 1580–1612) (*top*; no. 17); Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (r. 1612–1627) (*middle*; no. 19); and ‘Abd Allah Qutb Shah (r. 1626–1672) (*bottom*; no. 20) of Golconda. On the upper left is an illuminated inscription/ex libris written by Sultan Muhammad. *Ziyaratnamah*, transcribed by Muhammad Husayn.
 Source: Reg. p. 2721, page 3/fol. 2r (appendix, no. 19g)

Credit: Telangana State Archaeological Museum, Hyderabad. Photograph by Jake Benson, reproduced with the permission of the museum.

- e. *Zakhirah-i Khwarazmshahi* (The Treasury of the Khwarazm Shah) of Zayn al-Din Jurjani (d. 1136), copied by Baba Mirak Herati, Golconda, 22 Sha‘ban 980/December 28, 1572, illustrated (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, In. 30, fol. 445). Bibliography: Weinstein in Haidar and Sardar, eds. *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700*, 2015, cat. no. 96, 202–3.

f. *Khamsah* of Nizami, Golconda, c. 1575, illustrated (Hyderabad, Telangana [formerly Andhra Pradesh] State Archaeological Museum, MS P 1432, fol. 1r). A partial impression of this seal is visible above the illuminated title page. Bibliography: Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” 2011, fig. 4.59 and 143–64.

g. (figure 11.13) *Ziyaratnamah*: no. 19g

18. (figure 11.14) Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (r. 1612–1627)

Circular with a triple-lobed arched headpiece, ~40 × 31 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *nasta‘liq*

The stacked inscription reads from bottom to top and features prominent horizontal extensions (*kashidah*) in the words *Shah*, *bandah* and *Najaf*.

Sultan Muhammad Qutb-Shah, Bandah-i Shah-i Najaf 1020

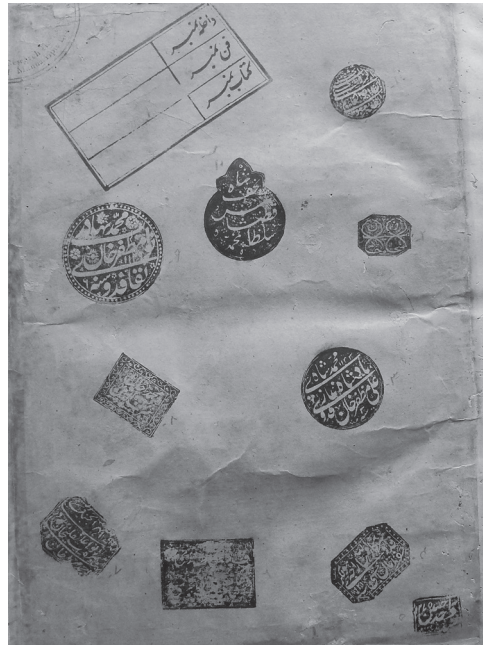
Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah, Servant of the King of Najaf [that is, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib] 1020 [1611–12, the latter year per the ruler’s accession]

Notable impressions:

a. *Khamsah* of Nizami Ganajavi (d. 1209), copied by Mahmud for Shah Rukh, Herat, dated 10 Rabi’ II 835/December 16, 1431, illustrated (St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museums, VR-1000, fols. 40r, 154r, 238r, 327r, and 441r). Provenance: Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (five impressions of this seal;



A



B

FIGURE 11.14A–B Seal impression of Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (r. 1612–1627) of Golconda (top center; no. 18). Qur’an manuscript attributed to Yaqut al-Musta‘simi (d. 1298).

Source: Mushaf 169, fol. 1r (Appendix, no. 18b)

Credit: Telangana State Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, Hyderabad. Photograph by Jake Benson, reproduced with the permission of the library.

one impression of the same ruler's seal no. 19; and a purchase note dated Rajab 1024/July-August 1615 noting the book's acquisition in Hyderabad); 'Abd Allah Qutb Shah (seal no. 20). Bibliography: Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts*, 2012, no. 1 and 63, 66–67, 68; Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," 2015, fig. 11.

- b. (figure 11.14) Qur'an manuscript attributed to Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d. 1298) (Hyderabad, Telangana State Oriental Manuscripts Library & Research Institute, Mushaf 169, fol. 1r). Provenance: Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah; Mughal library (seal of Muzaffar Khan Muhammad Shah Padshah Ghazi, dated regnal year 3, 1133/1720–21); eight additional seal impressions on the folio require analysis.

19. (figure 11.12 and figure 11.13) Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (r. 1612–1627)

Circular with a triple-lobed arched headpiece, 39 × 29 mm, double-ruled, Persian, *thuluth*

The main circular portion of this inscription is divided into four registers by the *kashidah* of individual letters in *sana*, *Sulayman*, *Sultan*, and *dilast*. The *kashidah* in *safdar* at the very top further differentiates the finial portion.

Naqsh-i nigin-i dilast safdar-i Haydar mara

Muhr-i Sulayman za Haqq gashta muyassir mara

*al-'Abd Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah, sana 1021*⁹⁴

The design of the seal is the heart, given by Haydar to us

The seal of Solomon is from the Truth, for our success

The servant, Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah, year 1021 [1612–13] ⁹⁵

Notable impressions:⁹⁶

- a. (figure 11.12) *Khusus al-Ni'am* of Ibn 'Arabi: no. 16a
- b. Persian translation of the *Anwar al-'Uqul* of Bayhaqi: no. 16b
- c. *Arba'a* of Hatifi: no. 16c
- d. *Yusuf va Zulaykha* of Jami: no. 17d (second flyleaf). At least seven other impressions are visible on the flyleaf in question, as well as the Muhammad Quli-period notation.
- e. *Khamsah* of Nizami: no. 18a. This impression is one of two Qutb Shahi seals on fol. 1r (the upper example, the lower one being no. 20). Although it is partially effaced and somewhat difficult to read, the four *kashidah* described above, as well as the date in the lower left, can be discerned. Bibliography: Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts*, 2012, 45; Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," 2015, fig. 10; Weinstein, "Variations on a Persian Theme," 2011, fig. 2.9; Simpson and Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings*, 2015, 46n101.⁹⁷
- f. *Jahangirnamah* of Jahangir, Hyderabad, dated Wednesday [26] Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1020/ January 29, 1612,⁹⁸ copied by Muhammad Mu'min "known as" (*mashhur bih*) 'Arab Shirazi (Patna, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, HL no. 43, fol. 1r). Provenance: Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah; 'Abd Allah

Qutb Shah (seal no. 20); Mughal library (acquired during the conquest of Golconda by Prince Muhammad Sultan [d. 1676], the eldest son of ‘Alamgir; see his seal dated 1065/1654–55 and the large three-lined notation on the folio in question). Bibliography: Abdul Muqtadir, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts*, 1921, no. 557; Seyller, “Inspection and Valuation,” 1997, 328; Aq’qal’ah, “Muhr’ha va Yaddasht’ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah,” 2015, figs. 15–16; for a digitized version of the manuscript, visit <http://kblibrary.bih.nic.in/Digitization/Jahangirnamah.pdf>.

- g. (figure 11.13) *Ziyaratnamah*, transcribed by Muhammad Husayn (Hyderabad, Telangana [formerly Andhra Pradesh] State Archaeological Museum, Reg. p. 2721, page 3/fol. 2r). Provenance: Lutf al-Husayni al-Shirazi, aka Malik al-Tujjar; ‘Abd Allah bin Lutf al-Husayni al-Shirazi, aka Malik al-Tujjar (see the inscriptions on fols. 1r and 141v and the effaced oval seal on fol. 1r); Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (seal no. 17; also see the notation dated 8 Muharram 1003/September 22, 1594, on fol. 141v stating it was a gift of ‘Abd Allah bin Malik al-Tujjar); Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (this seal and an illuminated notation/ex libris written by the ruler and dated to the start of Ramadan 1022/mid-October 1613⁹⁹); ‘Abd Allah Qutb Shah (seal no. 20); four other seal impressions are present on fol. 2r, and a notation on fol. 1r mentions that it was part of the library of the Dad Mahal (also see 19d). Bibliography: Chause, *Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Urdu Manuscripts*, 1953, 94–95.
- h. *Shahnamah*, place of production unknown, terminus ante quem of 1021/1612–13 (per this seal), illustrated (Cambridge University Library, Ms. Add. 269, fol. 1r). The impression appears next to a notation dated 1019/1610–11 and a valuation (*qimat*) of 300 *hun*, a substantial sum. Provenance: Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah; East India Company (inscription by librarian Charles Wilkins dated August 15, 1806). Bibliography: Aq’qal’ah, “Muhr’ha va Yaddasht’ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah,” 2015, fig. 8; University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-00269/11>.¹⁰⁰
- i. *Masnavi* of Jalal al-Din Rumi, Iran, c. 1400–1500, illustrated (London, British Library, ms. Or. 7693). Bibliography: Simpson and Marlow, *Princeton’s Great Persian Book of Kings*, 2015, 46n101.¹⁰¹
- j. *Risalah-i Miqdariyah*, a treatise on weights and measures by Mir Muhammad Mu’min Astarabadi (d. 1625), holograph copy by the author (Hyderabad, Salar Jung Museum, MS. 1757/Tibb 127). Bibliography: Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 10, 1983, no. 3868.

20. (figure 11.13) ‘Abd Allah Qutb Shah (r. 1626–1672)

Circular with triple-lobed arched headpiece, ~40 × 29 mm, double-ruled, Arabic and Persian, *thuluth*

The extended lines (*kashidah*) of the words *banda* and *inni*, as well as the final *ya* of *‘atana*, divide the circle into four distinct registers. Reading proceeds from top to middle, then bottom to middle.

Inni ‘Abd Allah ‘atana al-Kitab, bandah-‘i Shah-i Vilayat-i Qutb Shah 1037¹⁰²

Indeed, I am the servant of God; he has given me the Book; Servant of the King of Authority [that is, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib], Qutb Shah 1037 [1628–29]

Notable impressions:

- a. *Khamsah* of Nizami: no. 18a. This impression is the lower example on fol. 1r. Bibliography: Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts*, 2012, 45; Aq’qal’ah, “Muhir’ha va Yaddasht’ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah,” 2015, fig. 10; Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” 2011, fig. 2.9.
- b. *Jahangirnamah*: no. 10f.
- c. *Jawharnamah*, a miscellany containing three treatises on gemology, copied by Hasan Katib, dated 10 Dhu’l-Qa’dah 1032/August 14, 1645 (Tehran, Majlis library, Sana Library Ms. No. 793, fol. 205r). This seal impression is effaced. Provenance: Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah (also see the ruler’s seven-lined illuminated notation/ex libris dated 1034/1624–25). Bibliography: Aq’qal’ah, “Muhir’ha va Yaddasht’ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah,” 2015, fig. 14.
- d. (figure 11.13) *Ziyaratnamah*: no. 19g

NOTES

This essay is a general introduction to Deccani book culture and collecting, a subject that remains in its infancy and whose preliminary conclusions favor the ‘Adil Shahs (1490–1686, Bijapur) and Qutb Shahs (1496–1687, Golconda and Hyderabad). Knowledge of Bahmani (1347–1548, Gulbarga and Bidar) book arts is steadily blossoming, but the Nizam Shahs (1496–1636, Ahmadnagar) remain a glaring omission due to a current dearth of material. For a complete list of the region’s Islamic dynasties (hereafter “sultanates”), see Navina Haidar and Marika Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 346.

The opening essay is by Overton, the section titled “Overview of Deccani Seals: Form, Function, and Language” is by Benson, and the Appendix, “Catalog of Deccani Seals and Impressions” is a joint effort (Overton expresses her thanks to Benson for enthusiastically joining the project). Unless otherwise noted, all transliterations and translations are the work of Benson, expanding upon prior research conducted by Overton in 2009–2011. Figure reproductions appear in the chronological order of the Appendix (Bahmani, ‘Adil Shah, Qutb Shah), and we have generally favored the reproduction of unpublished material.

Acknowledgments: The study of library collections is rooted in patience, collaboration, practicality, and luck. We have benefited from the expertise and generosity of many scholars. We are grateful to Subah Dayal for helping us to decipher no. 19 through her sharing of impressions g and j; Peyvand Firouzeh for her insights on Ni’mat Allahi examples; Abdullah Ghouhani for reading nos. 6 and 8; Saqib Baburi for assistance with nos. 5, 6, 11, and 15; and Muhammad Javad Jiddi for invaluable help with nos. 16, 17, 18, and 20. Elaine Wright, Amélie Couvrat Desvergnés, Mahmood Alam, and John Seyller kindly provided measurements of impressions. Seyller’s work on the Mughal

library has been a long-standing inspiration, and we further thank Ada Adamova, Ahab Bdaiwi, Hamidreza Ghelichkhani, Francis Richard, Marianna Shreve Simpson, and Elaine Wright for important exchanges. Special thanks to Jan Just Witkam for help with secondary sources; 'Ali Safari Aq'qal'ah for providing a copy of his recent exemplary article on Qutb Shahi seals; and Ursula Sims-Williams for providing photographs of British Library manuscripts, facilitating viewings, sharing her transcription and translation of no. 12 (and bringing d and e to our attention), and advancing knowledge of BL volumes through her excellent blogs. Finally, we thank all repositories, collectors, and scholars who have allowed reproduction herein.

1. Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*. For a review of this exhibition and catalog, see Marianna Shreve Simpson, "Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy*. xi, 384. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, no. 1 (February 2016): 201–3.
2. Mark Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).
3. Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting*, fig. 54; Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*, cat. no. 38.
4. Kuwait, Al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, LNS 277 MS; Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*, cat. no. 98.
5. Roberta Smith, "'Sultans of Deccan India,' Unearthly Treasures of a Golden Age at the Met," review of the exhibition "Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *New York Times*, April 23, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1PnDJ7S>.
6. For some notable examples, see Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*, cat. nos. 45, 52, 194–95, and fig. 49.
7. For excerpts from these sources, as well as their relevant bibliographies, see D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., *Islamic Art & Visual Culture: An Anthology of Sources* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 3.5, 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, and 3.18, respectively. In the field of Deccani painting, the narrative is generally dominated by the following three sources: the *Gulshan-i Ibrahimi* (Rose Garden of Ibrahim) of Muhammad Qasim Hindushah Astarabadi (known as Firishta, d. 1611), the *Kitab-i Nawras* (Book of Nawras) of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627), and the *Sih Nasr* (Three Essays) of Nur al-Din Muhammad Zuhuri (d. 1616), with Malik Qummi (d. 1616). For a recent assessment of Firishta, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 46, where he concludes the following about the chronicle's motivation: "Incapable of challenging the Mughals in terms of their military might, the sultan [Ibrahim II of Bijapur] seems to have chosen instead to rival parts of their cultural production."
8. Among others, see Emma Flatt, "The Authorship and Significance of the *Nujum al-'Ulum*: A Sixteenth-Century Astrological Encyclopedia from Bijapur," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131, no. 2 (2011): 223–44; Navina Haidar, "The *Kitab-i Nauras*: Key to Bijapur's Golden Age," in *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan*

- Courts, 1323–1687*, ed. Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 26–43; Laura Weinstein, “The Shahnama in the Deccan: A Dispersed Bijapur Shahnama of ca. 1610,” in *Shahnama Studies III*, ed. Charles Melville and G. R. van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); and Deborah Hutton, “The Pem Nem: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Romance from Bijapur,” in *Sultans of the South: Arts of India’s Deccan Courts, 1323–1687*, ed. Navina Haidar and Marika Sardar (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 44–63. Six Qutb Shahi manuscripts are addressed in Laura Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme: Adaptation and Innovation in Early Manuscripts from Golconda” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2011).
9. John W. Seyller and W. M. Thackston, *The Adventures of Hamza: Painting and Storytelling in Mughal India* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 2002); and Marianna Shreve Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s Haft Awrang: A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1997).
 10. St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, VR-1000.
 11. Princeton University Library, Islamic MSS, third series, no. 310.
 12. See John Seyller’s seminal “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library,” *Artibus Asiae* 57, nos. 3–4 (1997), 243–349.
 13. On “connected histories,” see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.
 14. I borrow this term from Robert Skelton, who early on observed that Deccani painting “presented something of an enigma” due to a scarcity of both textual and visual “documents.” Robert Skelton, “Documents for the Study of Painting at Bijapur in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,” *Arts Asiatiques* 5, no. 2 (1958): 113.
 15. Seyller, “Inspection and Valuation,” Appendix A (“Manuscripts with Mughal Valuations”), is a critical resource for locating volumes with a Deccan-Mughal provenance (approximately eight are identified). For three volumes that entered the Mughal library as military booty during the Deccan campaigns, see 252n37. By 1687, all of the Deccan sultanates had fallen to the Mughals.
 16. Otto Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (London, 1877). Volumes identified with a “B” were discovered in the Asar Mahal in 1853. For a summary of this collection, see Saleemuddin Qureshi, “The Royal Library of Bijapur,” *Pakistan Library Bulletin* 11, nos. 3–4 (September–December 1980): 1–16.
 17. An excellent model is Adel T. Adamova and Manijeh Bayani, *Persian Painting: The Arts of the Book and Portraiture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), cat. no. 29, esp. 435–41 (with the assistance of John Seyller). For excellent reproductions of Qutb Shahi seals, see Ursula Sims-Williams, “Revisiting the Provenance of the Sindbadnamah (IO Islamic 3214),” Asian and African studies blog, British Library, June 27, 2016, <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/>; and “A Mughal Shahnama,” June 21, 2016, http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2016/06/a-mughal-shahnamah.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+asian-and-african+%28Asia+and+Africa%29.

18. To date, no original Deccani seal matrices have been identified.
19. Francis Richard, "Some Sixteenth-Century Deccani Persian Manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France," in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000), fig. 6; Keelan Overton, "Book Culture, Royal Libraries, and Persianate Painting in Bijapur, circa 1580–1630," *Muqarnas* 33 (2016), fig. 10; Keelan Overton, "From an Enigmatic Binding Stamp to a Holistic Reassessment: The St Andrews Qur'an," *Echoes from the Vault* (blog), University of St Andrews Library, December 2016, fig. 3, <https://standrewsrarebooks.wordpress.com/2016/12/20/from-an-enigmatic-binding-stamp-to-a-holistic-reassessment-the-st-andrews-quran/>. For previous misattributions, see Christie's, *Islamic Art and Manuscripts*, London, April 11, 2000, lot 79, 52–53; Crofton Black and Nabil Saidi, *Islamic Manuscripts* (Catalogue 22) (London: Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts), 2005, no. 27, 72–73.
20. For a seminal study on Bidar's built environment, see Ghulam Yazdani, *Bidar: Its History and Monuments* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947). The record of portable Bahmani material culture is currently limited to coins (Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*, cat. no. 1), metalwork (cat. nos. 2–3, 5–6), and a handful of examples of book arts (cat. no. 4 and p. 32). Also see Sims-Williams, "Revisiting the Provenance of the Sindbadnamah" on the *Sinbadnamah* dedicated to Muhammad Bahmani (r. 1358–1375) in 1374.
21. Keelan Overton, s.v. "Bahmani Dynasty," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Kramer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25147.
22. On Gisu Daraz, see chapter 2 in Richard Eaton, *The New Cambridge History of India I, 8: A Social History of the Deccan, 1300–1761: Eight Indian Lives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For the Nimat 'Allahis between Iran and the Deccan, see Peyvand Firouzeh, "Architecture, Sanctity, and Power; Ne'matollahī shrines and khānaqāhs in Fifteenth-Century Iran and India" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2015).
23. On Mahmud Gavan, see Eaton, *The New Cambridge History of India*, chap. 3.
24. Ali Anooshahr, "Shirazi Scholars and the Political Culture of the Sixteenth Century Indo-Persian World," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 55, no. 3 (2014): 331–52. See, also, Ahab Bdaiwi's essay in chapter 7 of this volume.
25. London, British Library, Loth 967 (B 7).
26. The style of illumination in figure 11.4B, combined with the nisba suffix *al-Azhari* appended to the name of the scribe (indicating a possible association with al-Azhar University in Cairo), suggest a Mamluk origin.
27. This manuscript was not found in Bijapur's Asar Mahal. As a result, it does not carry the "B" preface and is identified simply as IO Islamic 605.
28. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 124. For an image of the folio (fol. 294v), visit the Chester Beatty Library's Islamic Seals Database, <http://www.cbl.ie/islamicseals/View-Seals/346.aspx>.

29. For seals with comparable central knotting, see Venetia Porter, *Arabic and Persian Seals and Amulets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 2011), 97 (no. 434); and Muhammad Javad Jiddi, *Danishnamah-yi Muhr va Hakkaki dar Iran* (1392; Tehran: Kitabkhanah, Muzih va Markaz-i Asnad-i Majlis-i Shura-yi Islami, 2013), 192 (nos. 23 and 40), among many others.
30. A translation of the notation is published in A. J. Arberry, M. Minovi, and E. Blochet, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures. Vol. 1. MSS. 101–150*, ed. J. V. S. Wilkinson (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1959), 53.
31. A summary of Safavid and Mughal seals is provided in Porter, *Arabic and Persian Seals and Amulets*, 7–11.
32. For the larger seal naming the Twelve Imams, see Overton, “Book Culture,” fig. 16. For metalwork comparanda, see Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*, cat. nos. 154–55.
33. *Tadhkirat al-Muluk* (History of Kings, c. 1608–1612) of Rafi’ al-Din Shirazi (d. 1620), quoted from P. M. Joshi, “‘Ali ‘Adil Shah of Bijapur (1558–1580) and His Royal Librarian: Two Ruq’as,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay (New Series)* 31 & 32 (1956–57): 97.
34. Joshi, “‘Ali ‘Adil Shah of Bijapur.” Unfortunately, Joshi does not reproduce the documents (in Persian, with Modi transcription) and only describes some of the seals, including a *Nad-i ‘Aliyan* example and that of Mustafa Khan (inscribed *Mustafa Khan Ghulam-i Shah*), presumably in reference to Mustafa Khan Ardistani (d. 1580), who had migrated from Golconda to Bijapur in 1565. It is unclear if the former seal is the same example published in Ravinder Lonkar, *‘Adil Shahi Farmans* (Pune: Diamond, 2007), 223, and visible on several *farmans* dating to the reign of Ibrahim II (pp. 2–7).
35. Mughal collecting can be described as a dynastic enterprise—upon the death of an emperor, his books passed to his successor/son—but any comparable conclusions about ‘Adil Shahi collecting would be premature at this stage.
36. Approximately fifty volumes were part of the collection discovered in Bijapur’s Asar Mahal and now preserved in the British Library. See Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*; and Qureshi, “The Royal Library of Bijapur.” Overton, “Book Culture,” further identifies nineteen books or album folios once owned by Ibrahim II but now dispersed across the globe (see the Appendix, 131–37).
37. Robert Skelton, “The Mughal Artist Farrokh Beg,” *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957): 398.
38. For additional reproductions, see Overton, “Book Culture.”
39. See the examples included in Abdullah Ghouchani, Marika Sardar, and Navina Najat Haidar, “Inscribed Sacred Vessels,” in *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fancy*, ed. Navina Naja Haidar and Marika Sardar (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 259–67.
40. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, SP 1919, discussed in Seyller, “Inspection and Valuation,” 297; Richard, “Some Sixteenth-Century Deccani Persian Manuscripts,” figs. 9–12; Overton, “Book Culture,” Appendix no. 5 and fig. 17.
41. For a reevaluation and reattribution of this manuscript, see Keelan Overton and Kristine Rose-Beers, with contributions by Bruce Wannell, “Indo-Persian Histories from the

- Object Out: The St Andrews Qur'an Between Timurid, Safavid, Mughal, and Deccani Worlds," in *Iran and the Deccan: Persianate Art, Culture, and Talent in Circulation, ca. 1400–1700*, ed. Keelan Overton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming). Also see Overton, "Book Culture," Appendix no. 12 and figs. 22–24; Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989), cat. no. 141.
42. Francis Richard was the first to draw a comparison between Ibrahim's seal and this binding stamp. See Richard, "Some Sixteenth-Century Deccani Persian Manuscripts," 244. For reproductions, see Overton, "Book Culture," fig. 22; Overton, "From an Enigmatic Binding Stamp," figs. 1–2.
 43. On the minimal comparanda and precedent, see Overton, "Book Culture," 112–13.
 44. See the top margin of Overton, "Book Culture," fig. 21.
 45. The origin of this manuscript has been debated, but the consensus is that it dates to the reign of Humayun (r. 1530–1556). I (Overton) first learned of Muhammad's ownership of this book during Pramod Kumar's illuminating conference presentation titled "Deccan as Dominion in Nineteenth-Century Photographs of South India" (Metropolitan Museum of Art, May 12, 2015), and I sincerely thank him for sharing information. For an assessment of the folio in question (fol. 345r), see Seyller, "Inspection and Valuation," 311. The notation on the lower left may be Bijapuri. It includes the common phrase "collected into the royal library" (*jam' kitabkhanah-i 'amirah* [. . .]) and a valuation of 500 *huns* (gold coins used in the Deccan). On the manuscript in general, see Stuart Cary Welch, "Appendix E: A Mughal Manuscript of the Reign of Humayun," in *Tales of a Parrot = The Cleveland Museum of Art's Tuṭinama* (Cleveland: The Museum, 1978), 188–90. While acquiring books in the Deccan, 'Alamgir unsurprisingly gravitated toward his own cultural legacy. For a *Jahangirnamah* manuscript taken from the Qutb Shahi library upon the Mughal conquest of Hyderabad, see Appendix, no. 19f.
 46. On Asad Beg's stay in the Khan-i Khanan's camp during his 1603 delegation to Bijapur, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Witnessing Transition: Views on the End of the Akbari Dispensation," in *The Making of History: Essays Presented to Irfan Habib*, ed. N. Panikkar et al. (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000), 104–40. Also see Corinne Lefèvre, "The Court of 'Abd-ur-Rahīm Khān-i Khānān as a Bridge Between Iranian and Indian Cultural Traditions," in *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India*, ed. Thomas de Bruijn and Allison Busch (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 75–106.
 47. Adel Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts, Paintings and Drawings from the 15th to the Early 20th Century in the Hermitage Collection* (London: Azimuth Editions, 2012), no. 1.
 48. The most comprehensive and important study of Qutb Shahi seals to date is 'Ali Safari Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah va Muhr-i Sultan 'Abd Allah Qutbshah dar barkhi nuskah'ha-yi Kitabkhanah-yi Qutbshahiyan," *Awraq-i 'Atiq* 4 (2015): 221–50. Notable codices bearing Qutb Shahi impressions are also recorded in Marianna Shreve Simpson and Louise Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings: The Peck Shahnama* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2015), 39, 45n101–103. The findings of Aq'qal'ah and Simpson overlap in just one instance (the Hermitage *Kham-sah*). For our part, we have tried to introduce "new" material in this Appendix, nos. 16–20.

49. For the example belonging to Shah Isma'il I (r. 1501–1524), see Muhammad 'Ali Karimzadah Tabrizi, *Muhr'ha, Tughra'ha va Farman'ha-yi Padshahan-Iran: az Shah Isma'il-i Safavi ta Ahmad Shah Qajar* (London: M. A. Karimzadah Tabrizi, 2006), 4–9.
50. For a *Kimiya al-Sa'adat* (Alchemy of Happiness) of Muhammad al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) dated 10 Sha'ban 902/April 13, 1497 and bearing the seals of four Qutb Shahs (Ibrahim, Muhammad Quli, Sultan Muhammad, and 'Abd Allah), see Muhammad Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Salar Jung Museum & Library*, vol. 8, *Concerning 462 Manuscripts in Islamic Theology* (Hyderabad: Salar Jung Museum, 1983), no. 3206 (Tas. 259).
51. *Ziyaratnamah, tuhfa-hi Malik al-Tujjar raqqim Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah bi tarikh ghurah-i mah-i Ramazan al-Mubarak sana 1022* (we have slightly modified the transcription in Mohammad Ghouse, *Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Urdu Manuscripts in the Hyderabad Museum* [Hyderabad: Government Press, 1953], 95). For additional examples of Sultan Muhammad's illuminated inscription/ex libris, see Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," fig. 5 (*Rawzat al-Safa'*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS. Or. Fol. 169; 4 lines) and fig. 14 (*Jawahirnamah*, Tehran, Majlis Library; 7 lines) (no. 20c here); Richard, "Some Sixteenth-Century Deccani Persian Manuscripts," fig. 4 (BN, MS Suppl. Persan 151B; 5 lines).
52. For example, the Timurid-Safavid *Mantiq al-Tayr* (Conference of the Birds) (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 63.210).
53. One impression of Sultan Muhammad's slightly later, and apparently more common, seal dated 1021/1612–13 (Appendix, no. 19) also adorns the opening frontispiece (fol. 1r). Adjacent to it is the seal of 'Abd Allah dated 1037/1627–28 (Appendix, no. 20). For a reproduction, see Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts*, 45.
54. Overton, "Book Culture," fig. 19.
55. For the most recent reproduction and analysis of this inscription (fol. 475r), see Simpson and Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings*, 180–81. The entire manuscript is available for viewing online at <http://pudl.princeton.edu/objects/bg257f817>. Also see the earlier Louise Marlow, "The Peck *Shahnameh*: Manuscript Production in Late Sixteenth-Century Shiraz," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 229–43.
56. Mashhad, Astan-i Quds-i Razavi, no. 106. See Maryam Habibi, "Qur'an-i khatti shumarah-yi 106 bi khatti-i 'Abd al-Qadir Husayni Shirazi dar muzih-yi Astan-i Quds-i Razavi," *Art Quarterly* 8 (2014): 20–27. This article is forthcoming as a modified English translation by Arash Khazeni in Overton, ed., *Iran and the Deccan*.
57. Jake Benson's English translation of this *waqfnamah* is forthcoming in Overton, ed., *Iran and the Deccan*.
58. All of the Deccani seals discussed in this section are identified by their number in the Appendix. For a general overview of seals in Islamic culture, see Porter, *Arabic and Persian Seals and Amulets* and Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*. On "Khatam" and "Muhr," see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985-), 4:1102–5;

- 5:472–73. For Iranian seals specifically, see Hyacinthe Louise Rabino di Borgomale, *Coins, Medals, and Seals of the Shahs of Iran, 1500–1941* (Hertford, UK: S. Austin and Sons, 1945); Karimzadah Tabrizi, *Muhr’ha, Tughra’ha va Farman’ha-yi Padshahan-Iran*; and, most recently, Muhammad Javad Jiddi, *Danish’namah-yi Muhr va Hakkaki dar Iran*.
59. Saqib Baburi, “Persian Palaeography: A Millenium of Writing,” *Traces of the Hand from Africa to Asia: A Symposium on the Palaeography of the Arabic-Script Languages* (public lecture at King’s College, London, August 24, 2015).
60. For “*Dhu al-faqar* on Islamic Seals” and “Seals of the Imams,” see Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*, 176–77, 132–34.
61. Karimzadah Tabrizi, *Muhr’ha, Tughra’ha va Farman’ha-yi Padshahan-i Iran*, 23–30.
62. Porter, *Arabic and Persian Seals*, 1–2.
63. Hyderabad, Salar Jung Museum, Urdu Ms 153, discussed recently in Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” 175. In addition, fol. 29v features an illustration of Solomon enthroned attended by a court of men, beasts, and jinn, with an unusual application of a combed-patterned marbled papercut depicting a mythical simurgh flying among other birds overhead (189–92).
64. On the terms *khatam* and *muhr* as tropes in Persian poetry, see Sayyid Ja’far Sajjadi, *Farhang-i Istalahat va Ta’birat-i ‘Irfani* (1370; repr., Tehran: Intisharat-i Tahuri, 1991–92), 335, 751. For *muhr-i nigin*, see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd. ed., 5:557.
65. This is a central theme of the illustrated Bijapuri *Pem Nem* (Laws of Love) (London, British Library, Add. 16880), in which the image of the beloved Mahji is literally depicted as engraved upon the heart of her lover Shahji. On this manuscript, see Hutton, “The *Pem Nem*.”
66. For a similar central plaited knot, see Vladimir Grigorevich Lukonin and Anatoly Ivanov, *The Lost Treasure: Persian Art* (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2013), cat. no. 139. Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*, 129 (above, E), includes a series of plaited knots intermingled with the phrase “My trust is in my creator” (*tawakkuli ‘ala khaliqi*). Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*, 133 (above, C), features a single central knot evolving into, and dividing, the names of the Twelve Imams (the ‘*ayn* of ‘*Ali*, for example, is part of the knot). On the relationship between seals and amulets, see Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*, 96–98.
67. For an intriguing mid-eighteenth century parallel between a seal and parasol (the latter framing the former as an illumination), see Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*, 164.
68. On the Safavid use of this form, see Gallop and Porter, *Lasting Impressions*, 162.
69. Readers are encouraged to cross-reference against Seyller, “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts,” 1997; Richard, “Some Sixteenth-Century Deccani Persian Manuscripts,” 2000; Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” 2011; Aq’qal’ah, “*Muhr’ha va Yaddasht’ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah*,” 2015; and Overton, “Book Culture,” 2016; among others.
70. The term *kashidah* derives from the Persian root *kashidan* (to draw out, to extend).

71. For a Bijapuri notation explicitly referencing the “Qadiri library,” presumably that of the Sufi lodge, see Appendix, no. 14a.
72. Haroon Khan Sherwani, *Mahmud Gawan, the Great Bahmani Wazir* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1942), 115, 135.
73. Mahmud Gawan, *Riyaz al-Insha*, ed. Chand bin Husayn (Hyderabad: Sarkar-i ‘Ali, 1948), no. 90, 272–76.
74. Due to the poor quality of the impression in question, a complete reading is difficult.
75. Qabil Khan inspected the Asar Mahal collection during ‘Alamgir’s reign. His seal is documented throughout Seyller, “Inspection and Valuation.” Also see Overton, “Book Culture,” Appendix nos. 5, 9, and 10.
76. This analysis is tentative and inconclusive, being based upon a single poor-quality impression with problematic orthography. It is the most difficult and confusing of the samples presented here, but we nonetheless include it because it is both the earliest known ‘Adil Shahi seal and is impressed in an illustrious manuscript. We thank the following scholars for their slightly differing readings: Abdullah Ghousechani, Yaser Atar, Mahmood Alam, and Saqib Baburi. What is presented here is a hybrid chosen by Benson based on these interpretations and also considering tropes and rhyming schemes.
77. The volume’s lengthy Ibrahim II-period notation in the form of an inverted triangle (figure 11.7B) mentions this “large” (*buzurg*) seal of ‘Ali I but references it with the phrase *wa man yarghabu*. This is the opening of Qur’an 2:130, the verse selected for the largest seal of Ibrahim II (Appendix, no. 10). A later scribe appears to have recognized the erroneous association between this Qur’anic verse and ‘Ali’s seal, crossed out both the description and false attribution, and more appropriately described the seal in question with the phrase *Dhu’l-Fiqar*.
78. Overton “Book Culture,” 97–98, based on Deborah Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 110–11, and insights shared by Wheeler Thackston.
79. Many other impressions of this seal can be found in the British Library Asar Mahal volumes.
80. Because the significance of this seal impression was realized in the late stages of this essay, it could not be included in the Appendix. Various readings are documented, but the one given here is reported in the *Matla’ al-‘Irfan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an* (Commencement of Gnosis in the Commentary of the Qur’an) by the Shirazi Shi‘i scholar Ghiyath al-Din Dashtaki (d. 1542). See the critical edition published in Ghiyath al-Din Dashtaki, “Matla’ al-‘Irfan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an,” in *Musannafat Ghiyath al-Din*, ed. ‘Abdullah Nurani (1386; Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2006–7), vol. 1, 353.
81. For additional iterations of this verse and seal design in Ibrahim-era art, see Overton, “Book Culture,” fig. 12 (his tomb complex, the Ibrahim Rauza), figs. 14–16 (his tripartite ex libris), and fig. 22 (his binding stamp). On Ibrahim’s *tawbah*, see Bruce Wannell, “The Epigraphic Program of the Ibrahim Rauza in Bijapur,” in *Sultans of the South*, ed. Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 255–56, 259, 266.

82. A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16. Note that Arberry mistakenly assigns this translation to verse 124.
83. For the most recent list of manuscripts and album folios bearing this impression, see Overton, "Book Culture," Appendix, 131–37, developing the earlier work of Richard, "Some Sixteenth-Century Deccani Persian Manuscripts" (for example, fig. 6) and Seyller, "Inspection and Valuation," in particular.
84. A different bifolium from the same album is published in Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans of Deccan India*, cat. no. 77, 166.
85. Loth originally cataloged 526 as B 181B (p. 144), but this has since been changed to B 181A and is not to be confused with Loth 525/B 181 (originally B 181A). For the latter, see Overton, "Book Culture," fig. 5.
86. Saqib Baburi suggests that the displaced letter *nun* at the top-right may refer to one of the alternative letter-names of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic tradition.
87. It is unclear if this is the same Faza'il Khan who received a copy of the *Kitab Suwar al-Kawakib al-Thabitah* (Book of the Fixed Stars) of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi in 1104/1692–93 "at the place of Gulkala in the region of Bijapur" (Seyller, "Inspection and Valuation," 304).
88. In this blog, Ursula Sims-Williams also discusses another impression of this seal in a copy of the *Sharh al-Qadim* (London, British Library, Loth 406/B 207, fol. 1r): Ursula Sims-Williams, "Nasir Shah's Book of Delights," Asian and African Studies blog, British Library, November 21, 2016, <http://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2016/11/nasir-shahs-book-of-delights.html>.
89. Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yad'dasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," discusses and/or reproduces the following manuscripts bearing Qutb Shahi seals: Translation of the *Anwar al-'Uqul min Ash'ar Wasi al-Rasul* (Lights of the Intellect from the Poems of the Custodians of the Prophet) of Muhammad Bayhaqi (Hyderabad, Salar Jung Museum, MS. 2564), fig. 1 (no. 16b here); *Kimiya al-Sa'dat* (Alchemy of Happiness) of Muhammad al-Ghazzali (Tehran, Majles Library No. 581), fig. 2; *Rawzat al-Safa'* (Garden of Purity) of Mir Khwand (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS. Or. Fol. 169), fig. 5; *Shahnamah* of Firdawsī (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 269), fig. 8 (no. 19h here); *Divan* of Hafiz (Tehran, Majlis Library, no. 870), fig. 9; *Khamisa* of Nizami (St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, VR-1000), fig. 10–11 (no. 18a here); *al-Tafhim li-Awa'il Sina'at al-Tanjim* (Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology) (Dushanbe: Farhangistan-i 'Ulum Library, no. 385), fig. 12; *Jawahirnamah* (miscellany of three texts on gemology) (Tehran, Majlis Library), figs. 13–14 (no. 20c here); *Jahangirnamah* Patna, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library), fig. 15–16 (no. 19f here); *Divan* of Falaki Shirvani (Qum, Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi Library, no. 14355), fig. 17; *Divan* of Pur Bahai Jami (London, British Library, Ms. Add. Or. 9213), fig. 18; *Divan* of Zil Allah Deccani (Tehran, Majlis Library), fig. 19. In order not to replicate efforts, our "Notable impressions" generally focuses on other manuscripts, with some exceptions.
90. A transcription is published in Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 8, no. 3206, 107; Muhammad Ashraf, *A Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian*

Manuscripts in the Salar Jung Museum & Library, vol. 7, *Concerning 627 Manuscripts of Islamic Theology* (Hyderabad: Salar Jung Museum and Library, 1980), no. 2564, 105; Weinstein, "Variations on a Persian Theme," 59n28; and Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yad'dasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," 223.

91. Meaning here the family of the Prophet Muhammad.
92. The accession number is given as acc. 4374.
93. A transcription is published in Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 8, no. 3206, 107; idem, *A Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 7, no. 2564, 105 (incomplete).
94. A transcription is published in Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," 224 (the date is read as 1020); also see Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 8, no. 3206, 107 (incomplete); and Ashraf, *A Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 7, no. 2564, 106 (incomplete).
95. The apparent numbers in the date literally read "10121," which has stimulated a great deal of confusion. The date has been read as 1012/1603–4, 1020/1611–12, and 1021/1612–13, which would variously assign it to Muhammad Quli or Sultan Muhammad. We favor the last option (1021), per the inscription's clear naming of *Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah*, who attained the throne on 17 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1020/January 11, 1612. Because he was crowned late in the hijri year, the additional number 1 inserted in the midst of the year 1021 probably indicates Sultan Muhammad's first regnal year. See H. K. Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shāhi Dynasty* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manohar Lal, 1974), 295, 385; Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," 224, also assigns the seal to Sultan Muhammad but reads the date as 1020. For a seal of Muhammad Quli in which he is explicitly named as such (*Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah*), see no. 17.
96. Jiddi, *Danishnamah-yi Muhr va Hakkaki dar Iran*, 392, reproduces an impression of this seal, but the exact manuscript and folio is not provided.
97. Adamova's attribution to Abu'l Hasan Qutb Shah (r. 1672–1687) in Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts*, 44; and Simpson's to Muhammad Quli in Simpson and Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings*, 46n101, require correction.
98. Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," reads the date of the manuscript as 1029, but it is in fact 1020. See Bahadur Khan Abdul Muqtadir, ed., *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library at Patna*, vol. 7, *Indian History* (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1921), 58.
99. For the transcription, see note 51 above.
100. As elsewhere, the website attributes the seal to Muhammad Quli.
101. We thank Shreve Simpson for sharing a photograph of this impression, earlier provided by Ursula Sims-Williams.
102. A transcription is published in Aq'qal'ah, "Muhr'ha va Yaddasht'ha-yi Sultan Muhammad Qutbshah," 230; also see Ashraf, *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 8, no. 3206, 107.

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1.1. CONFESSIONS OF AN ARMENIAN CONVERT: THE I‘TIRAFNAMA OF ABKAR (‘ALI AKBAR) ARMANI (RUDI MATTHEE)

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1.2. CONVERSION, APOSTASY, AND RELATIONS BETWEEN
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1.3. THE NIGHT DEBATES AT JAHANGIR'S COURT: 'ABD
AL-SATTAR'S MAJALIS-I JAHANGIRI (CORINNE LEFEVRE)

TRANSLATED SOURCES

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2.1. THE SHI‘A PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS: THE STRENGTH OF AKHBARISM IN SAFAVID IRAN (MARYAM MOAZZEN)

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2.3. A MUGHAL DEBATE ABOUT JAIN ASCETICISM (AUDREY TRUSCHKE)

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3.1. OPPOSITION TO SUFISM IN SAFAVID IRAN: A DEBATE BETWEEN MULLA MUHAMMAD-TAHIR QUMMI AND MULLA MUHAMMAD-TAQI MAJLISI (ATA ANZALI)

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3.2. THE WORLDVIEW OF A SUFI IN THE OTTOMAN REALM: HAKIKI AND HIS BOOK OF GUIDANCE (F. BETUL YAVUZ)

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3.3. SUFISM AND THE DIVINE LAW: AHMAD SIRHINDI’S RUMINATIONS (ARTHUR F. BUEHLER)

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5.3. THE WAY OF TRADITION AND THE PATH OF INNOVATION:
AURANGZEB AND DARA SHUKUH'S STRUGGLE FOR THE
MUGHAL THRONE (JANE MIKKELSON)

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6.1. IMPERIAL GEOPOLITICS AND THE OTIOSE QUEST FOR QANDAHAR (HANI KHAFIPOUR)

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7.3. PHILOSOPHY AND LEGAL THEORY: THE MUSALLAM
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COMMENTARY BY 'ABD AL-'ALI BAHR AL-'ULUM
(ASAD Q. AHMAD)

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(ESRA AKIN-KIVANC)

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